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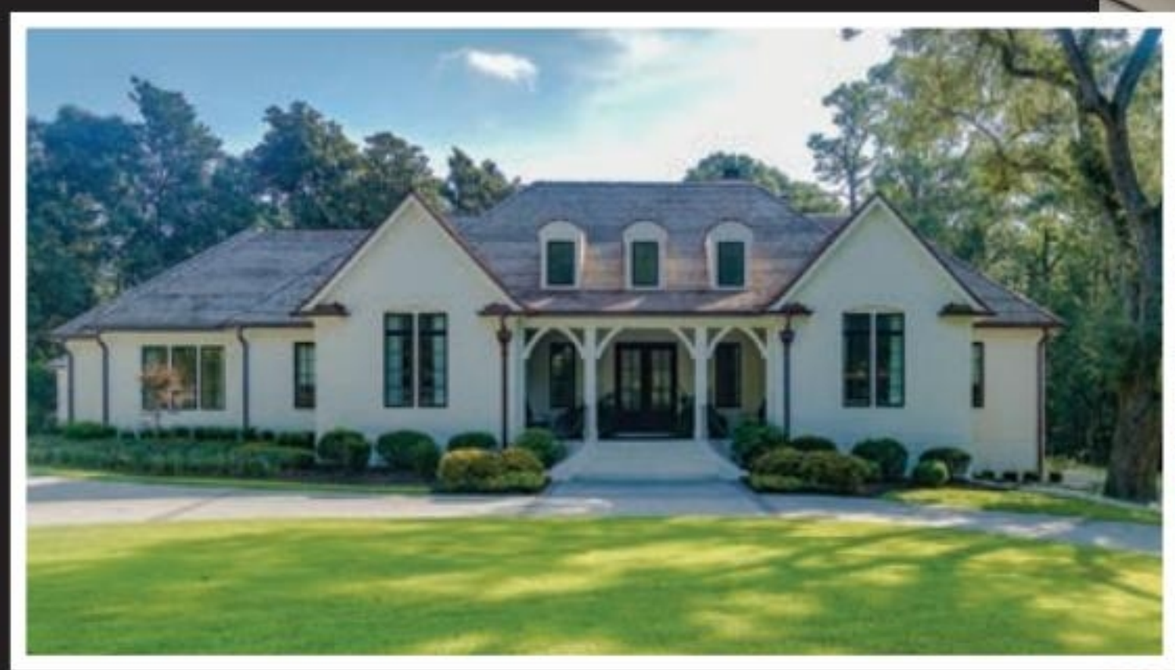

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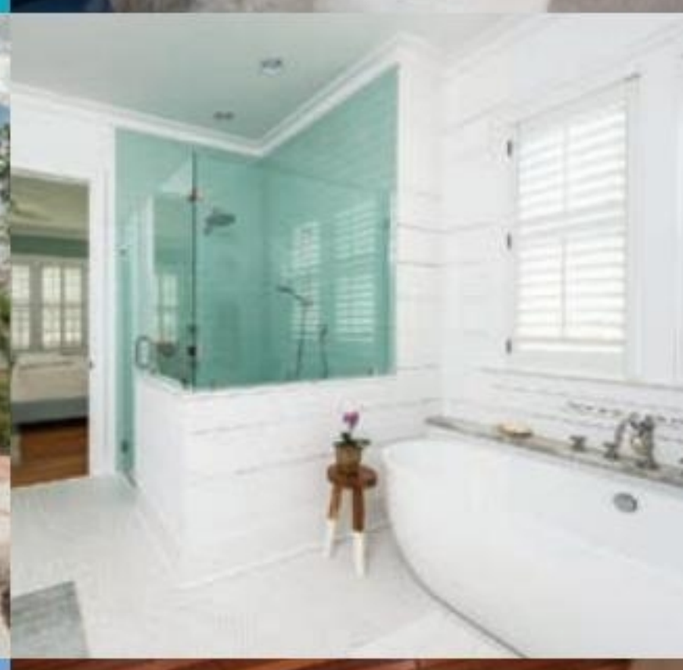

1205 Great Oaks Drive · Landfall · $2,995,000

New construction on the Intracoastal Waterway in Landfall. This spectacular coastal design by Logan Homes features an open casual floor plan, stainless steel natural gas appliances, HVAC, tankless hot water heater, energy efficient spray foam insulation, Quartz Counters, Ipe decking, telescoping doors, 3 car garage, 5 bedrooms (including 2 master suites on 1st floor) 5 1/2 baths, beamed ceilings, large waterfront screened porch.

2017 Balmoral Place · Landfall · $2,195,000

Located on the headwaters and tidal Marsh of the Howe Creek in Landfall's estate area of The Highlands, this 1.7 acre property is gated and fenced. The Mediterranean style boasts high ceilings with loads of natural light and includes 6 bedrooms each with bath en suite and 2 additional half baths.

705 Planters Row · Landfall · $1,395,000

This spectacular Mediterranean design is tucked discretely down a winding driveway planted with lush landscaping on over one acre of private gardens and fenced rear yard. A new gunite saltwater pool is luxuriously surrounded by tumbled limestone pavers, a rock faced waterfall hot tub/spa and stone fireplace with covered gazebo.

1525 Black Chestnut Drive · Landfall · $1,295,000

If privacy & elegance are important, this beautiful Mediterranean inspired Landfall home is a must see! Overlooking a scenic lake and Jack Nicklaus designed golf course (Pines #6 and 7). This masterpiece captures the best sun and prevailing breeze with its treasured southern exposure.

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239 River Ridge Drive · River Landing · $549,000

After passing through the gates of river landing you will find this gem of a home nestled next to the 16th green and pond. Vaulted wooden ceilings give this 4 bedroom 3 bathroom home a feeling of relaxed grandeur from the moment you walk through the front door. An open floor plan with intimate details such as the hot tub off the master suite make this the perfect family home.

2020 Kenilworth Lane · Landfall · $549,000

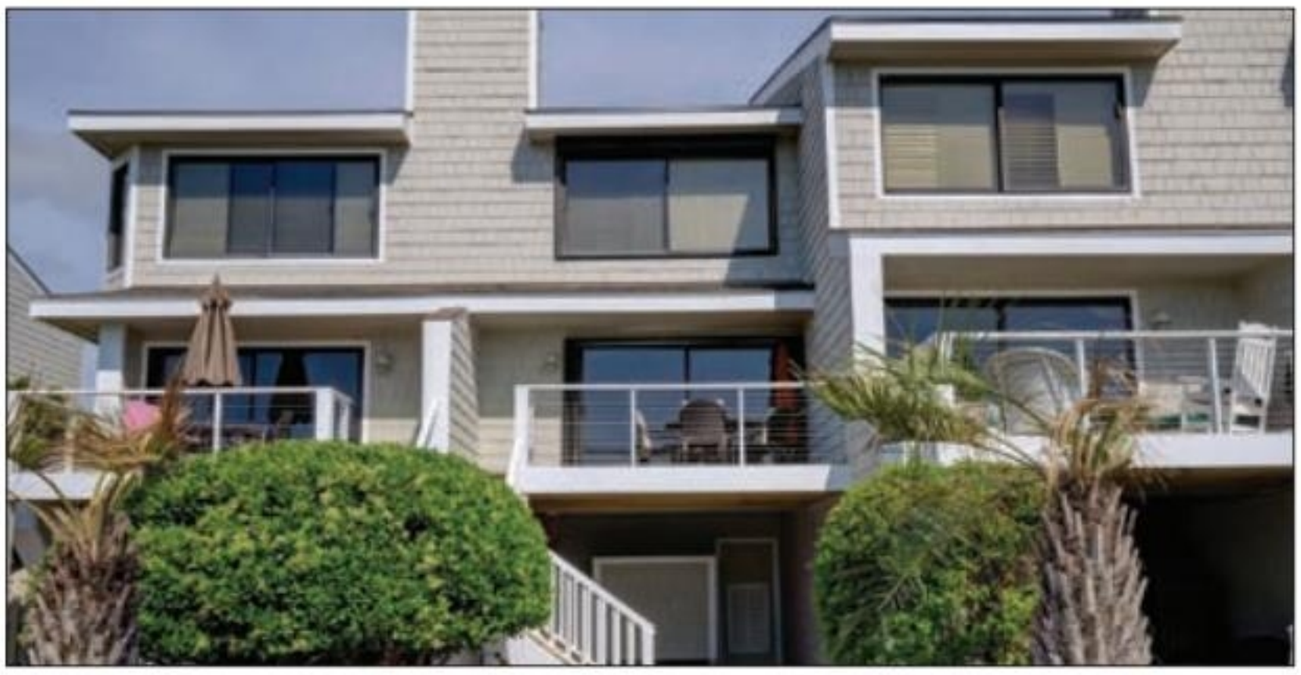
This all brick low maintenance home features a semi- open floor plan including study, dining room and vaulted ceiling great room. A generous first floor master suite has his and hers walk in closets and a spa like bath. The chefs kitchen includes huge center island for entertaining and granite/ stainless. Upstairs are 3 additional bedrooms, 2 baths and an office.

281 Beach Road N · Figure Eight Island · $2,195,0000

Located on a high ridge lot overlooking the marsh and tidal creek in fabulous Figure 8 Island, this reverse plan offers great ocean views and convenient beach access across the street. This 4 bedroom 3 1/2 bath residence is nestled in the maritime live oaks and features multiple decks, an elevator, 2 car carport, outdoor shower, vaulted ceilings and over sized windows to take the views in every direction!

1529 Landfall Drive · Landfall · $1,595,000

Located on a high bluff overlooking the Intracoastal Waterway and Wrightsville Beach, this custom brick villa with standing seam metal roof offer the perfect combination of a casual floor plan and elegant finishes. From the welcoming curved stairs and travertine floors, to the coiffered ceilings, this home boasts a first floor master suite overlooking the ICW with his and her walk-in closets.



101 S. Lumina Avenue · Station One · $1,289,000

Cherished ocean front Station One Townhouse updated with new granite/stainless kitchen, handscraped hardwood floors and updated baths! Enjoy the amazing 3 bedroom, 3 bath home with fireplace, outdoor shower and garage.

2205 Fox Hunt Lane· Landfall · $639,000

Quality built by Steve Dunn, this all brick home features hard wood floors, 10' ceilings and heavy crown moldings. This 4 bedroom 4 1/2 bath home has been completely updated with all new roof, windows carpeting, painting, and appliances! Move right in and start enjoying this home located in the center of Landfall.

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606 Ravenswood Road · Hampstead · $525,000

Located on the headwaters of Hampstead's scenic Virginia Creek, this well designed home was custom built with casual elegance in mind. Hardwood floors and a cathedral ceiling welcome you inside and offer a great floor plan that flows nicely around a huge chef's kitchen and creek front sun room.

723 Quinn Drive· Marsh Landing Place · $349,000

Built in 2017, this fabulously designed Marsh Landing Place home features an open floor plan with cathedral ceiling great room open to crisp white kitchen with granite counters and stainless appliances. The dining room includes detailed wainscoting, tray ceiling and hardwood floors that extend thru the great room anchored by gas fireplace and built-ins.

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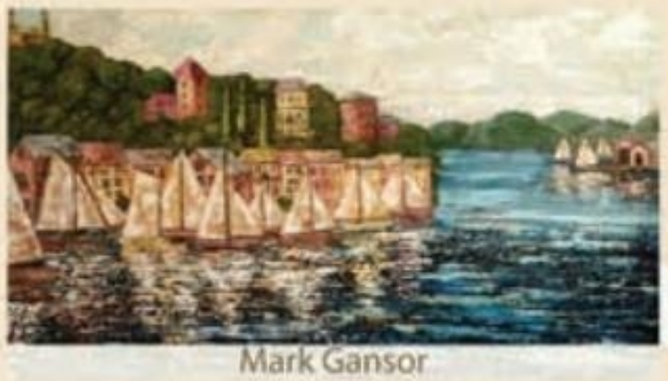
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June 2018

Features

45 Peaches
Poetry by Steve Cushman

46 A Man Called Champion
By Kevin Maurer
The Atlantic Coast Line's Champion Davis made the legendary trains run on time – and he painted them purple

50 Confessions of a First-Time Boat Builder
Story & Photographs by John Wolfe
Creating a seaworthy craft on your own porch takes vision, good friends, and not a little Gorilla Glue. Popular Science *would be proud of* Sapona

56 Scents and Sensibility
By Bridgette A. Lacy
The loss of smell brings an unexpected gift

60 A Clean Slate
By William Irvine
With a cottage in Landfall, Dave and Kathy Thiessen found the perfect way to begin the next chapter of life

69 Almanac
By Ash Alder

Departments

15 Simple Life
By Jim Dodson

20 SaltWorks

23 Omnivorous Reader
By D.G. Martin

27 Lunch With a Friend
By Dana Sachs

31 In the Spirit
By Tony Cross

35 Port City Journal
By Jason Frye

38 Notes From the Porch
By Bill Thompson

41 Birdwatch
By Susan Campbell

42 Lord Spencer Speaks

70 Calendar

75 Port City People

79 Accidental Astrologer
By Astrid Stellanova

80 True South
By Susan Kelly

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Letting Go

Until then, hang on to dear, sweet life

By Jim Dodson

On a glorious end-of-spring afternoon, my friend Keith Bowman took me to see his farm, 15 miles southeast of town, a forested tract of land to which he has devoted the last 35 years so as to turn it into a peaceable kingdom for people who love nature.

We met when I wrote about Keith and three college buddies who've attended every Masters Tournament together since 1960, a friendship still going strong 60 years later. During our conversations about Augusta National, Keith let on that he once took a sprig of the famous Augusta azaleas hoping to root and grow the same plant here in North Carolina on his farm where he and a cousin cultivated more than 600 azaleas and rhododendron.

When he learned I was an addicted gardener, he invited me to ride out someday and see his "garden that's gone a little wild."

Before that, however, was the matter of an old tree.

"There it is," he said, pulling to the side on a quiet lane that turned off the Company Mill Road. "What do you think of that?"

The tree was an ancient poplar, rising from a small forested vale below the road bed, massive and very mystical-looking, knotted and gnarly as a giant's index finger rising to a deep blue sky, at least 13 feet or so in circumference. The monster looked like something out of a children's story, the home of a Druid king or hermit wizard.

"One day when I was about 13, my father brought me here to see this tree and told me how his grandfather hid in it to avoid being conscripted by the Confederate army." On his next birthday, Keith Bowman will be 85. "The tree was probably close to 100 years old back then."

"What amazes me is how it has survived everything from rough weather to changes here in the countryside," said Keith. "Its top was sheared off long ago but it's still putting out limbs and leaves. It just won't let go, comes back year after year."

Keith's farm, which is named Ironwood and sits near the village of Climax, was pretty amazing in its own right. Though there are fields he leases to neighbors for raising crops, most of the 120-acre property is covered by a gorgeous forest of hardwoods. There is a handsome unpainted farmhouse and a large barn well off the road, both of which suffered significant damage from the great ice storm of 2014, when large trees toppled onto their roofs. Other trees fell onto the spectacular octagonal gazebo built by Keith and his late father, Ross, beside the acre-and-a-half pond Keith had built at the heart of his earthly paradise.

The gazebo and pond were designed for swimming and fishing. The structure features hand-cut wooden shingles from the mountains and is bunkered by the aforementioned red and white azaleas.

"Because of the ice storms, the place doesn't look as nice as it used to," Keith needlessly apologized. "But this has certainly been a source of a lot of joy to me, friends and neighbors," he allowed as we walked through the woods to see the remains of a large nursery where rhododendron and large azaleas were returning to a wild state.

In the farm's glory days, Keith invited school groups and neighbors from nearby Climax to use the property for "a getaway in nature," and once threw a party for neighbors from the crossroads with barbecue and a bluegrass band.

Ironwood visitors fished, had picnics, hiked and swam. There is even a fancy paneled outhouse with a cathedral roof, skylight, electric lights, running water and a chandelier. "It's kind of the Cadillac of outhouses," Keith joked.

Across the pond, he installed an orchard with 81 fruit trees and a large grape arbor of Concord, scuppernong and muscadine varieties. "For years I had so much fruit I couldn't give it away," he told me as we strolled around the pond.

It was late in the day and the surrounding woods were stirring

with life, full of birdsong. The light was almost ethereal, the serenity complete in the seclusion of Keith Bowman's Peaceable Kingdom.

"You wouldn't believe all the wildlife around us," he was moved to say as we walked, pausing to marvel as a trio of honking Canada geese zoomed over the pond and our heads, heading north with spring. "That's why it means so much to me to keep this place the way it is — to pass it along to someone who will properly care for it and allow others to use it for relaxation and spiritual renewal."

As a kid, Keith dreamed of becoming a test pilot, and nearly achieved that dream by training as a fighter pilot during the Cold War. After that he worked as an engineer on the Nike missile for Western Electric in Burlington. A long career with the Small Business Administration followed — he was in charge of both Carolinas for a time — introducing him to good friends he keeps up with this day. For a decade he performed with a traveling gospel group. Though he never married ("a couple of near-misses," he says with a wistful laugh, "that just didn't work out") he has enjoyed a full life of faith and friendship, belonging to several different churches.

It's the uncertain fate of Ironwood that chews at him. Since the death of a neighbor who did most of the heavy maintenance work on the property, Keith can't possibly keep up with all that needs to be done.

"I don't have any relations left to give it to," he admitted, as we started back to his car. "That's a problem I think a lot of older Americans face these days. As we get older out in the country, younger folks aren't replacing us. They want to live in the city. You can't blame them. But connections will be lost."

For this reason, Keith has spent decades photographing nature and creating documents to show what was done, filling several meticulously organized scrapbooks.

When I suggested that he might consider giving the farm to a local church for a retreat or youth camp, given his strong connections to local congregations, he smiled and shook his head. "I know people who have done just that. Most churches would sell the property for other purposes."

On the drive back to town, he showed me the historic Tabernacle Methodist Church where generations of his family are buried. The interior of the church was a handmade gem. Keith has photographed all of its stained glass windows.

"I think about a line I heard from the film *Life of Pi*," he mused as we drove back into town. "All of life seems to be about letting go of things you love. Truthfully, I'm the worst person in the world at letting things go," he said with a laugh. "But you've got to eventually let it go. I know that."

Keith and his personal nature preserve were still on my mind a few days later when I phoned my friend Joe who is an experienced forester who helps people just like Keith figure out what to do with their land when the time arrives to let it go. Joe, as I knew he would, agreed to give his perspective and advice.

I even looked up the quote from *Life of Pi*, which goes, "I suppose in the end, the whole of life becomes an act of letting go, but what always hurts the most is not taking a moment to say goodbye."

Keith, at least, is taking his own sweet time to say goodbye.

Out in my half-finished Japanese garden, meanwhile, which has

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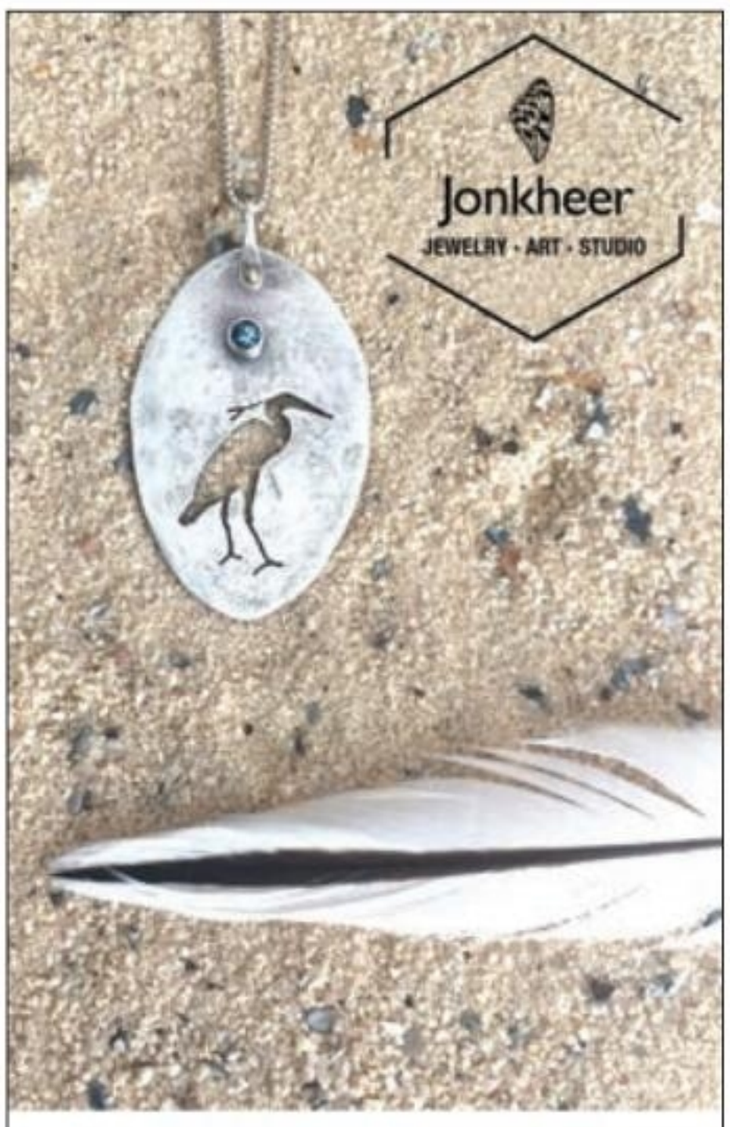

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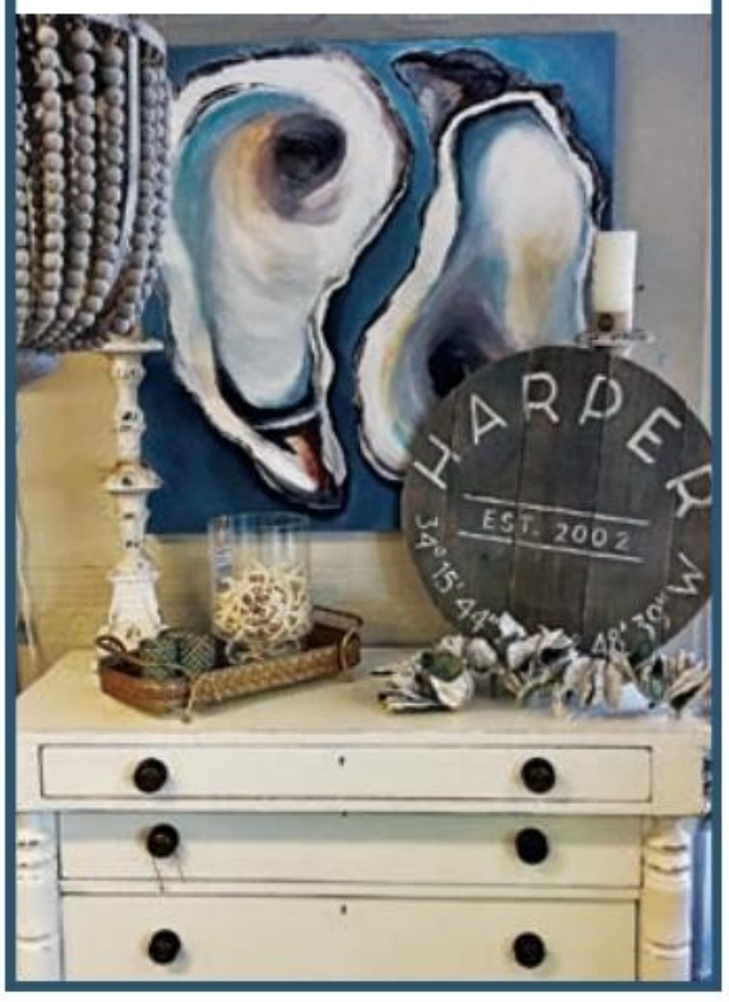

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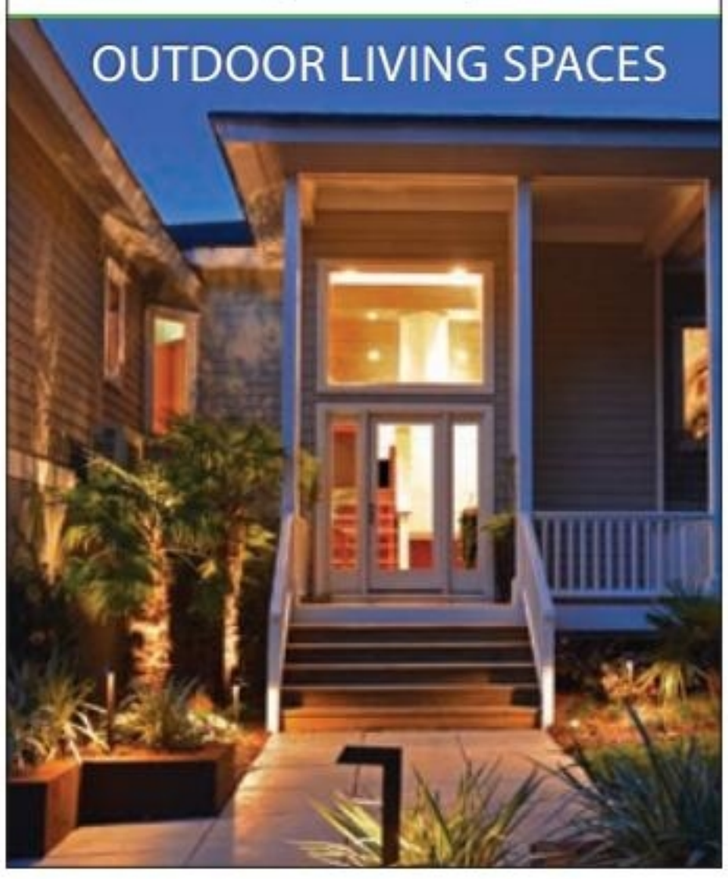

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shown great improvement over the course of a cool and rainy spring, I couldn't help but think about the things of this world I treasure but will someday have to let go.

As it happened, I was planting a pair of Red Slipper azaleas and a Christmas fern mixed with the ashes of the three well-loved golden retrievers that brought our family incalculable joy over the years. My garden will be the final resting places for dear old Amos, Bailey and Riley the Rooster, as we called him — and, with a little luck, perhaps the head gardener as well.

A rusted iron sign that stood forever in the peonies of my late mother's garden read: Dig in the soil, delve in the soul. No place better than one's garden to do that. Thomas Jefferson always made lists that he kept in his back pocket, especially when in his garden.

Keith and his farm were still on my mind, and I couldn't help but make my own mental list of the people and things of this world I shall someday have to let go.

Naturally, my adorable wife and four great kids top the list — though with luck they'll have to let go of me first.

As I dug, my simple list grew: my dog Mulligan, old friends, golf with buddies, quiet time in my garden, a house that finally feels like home, early church, arboretums, old hymns, my wife's caramel cake, histories and spy novels, birds at the feeder, the glory of spring, the spice of autumn, the silence of snowy nights, film scores, dawn walks, rainy Sundays, supper on the porch, the blue of dusk, garden catalogs, my new rubber boots, my old guitar, blue limericks, roses in June, freshly baked bread, driving back roads, all of Scotland, half of England, the poems of Billy Collins and Mary Oliver, and a few other things I shall surely miss and think of later.

Leave it to Mary Oliver to offer the best advice to Keith and me and others like us.

"To live in this world," she said, "you must be able to do three things. To love what is mortal and hold it against your bones knowing your own life depends on it; and then, when the time comes to let it go, to let it go."

Contact Editor Jim Dodson at jim@thepilot.com.

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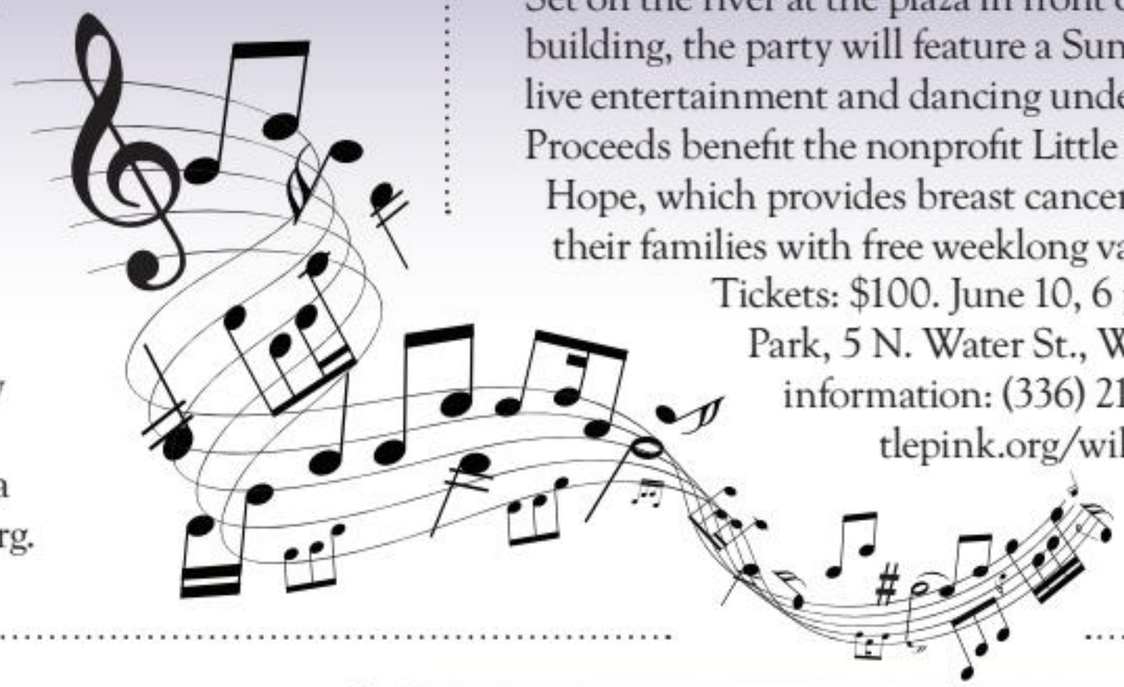
Blues on a Summer Night

Jazz aficionados of Wilmington already know about the Cape Fear Blues Jam, which takes place every Tuesday evening at the Rusty Nail on South Fifth Street, thanks largely to the efforts of the Cape Fear Blues Society. The organization celebrates its 23rd year with the Cape Fear Blues Festival on June 22 and 23, featuring both local artists and national performers on a variety of stages in downtown Wilmington. A few of the acts booked to date: Chicago blues veteran Jon MacDonald, guitarist and songwriter Justin Cody Fox (both Wilmingtonians), Feral Cats, and the Jeff Fetterman Band. June 22 - 24. Various locations. For a full schedule of events and ticket info: capefearblues.org.



Think Pink

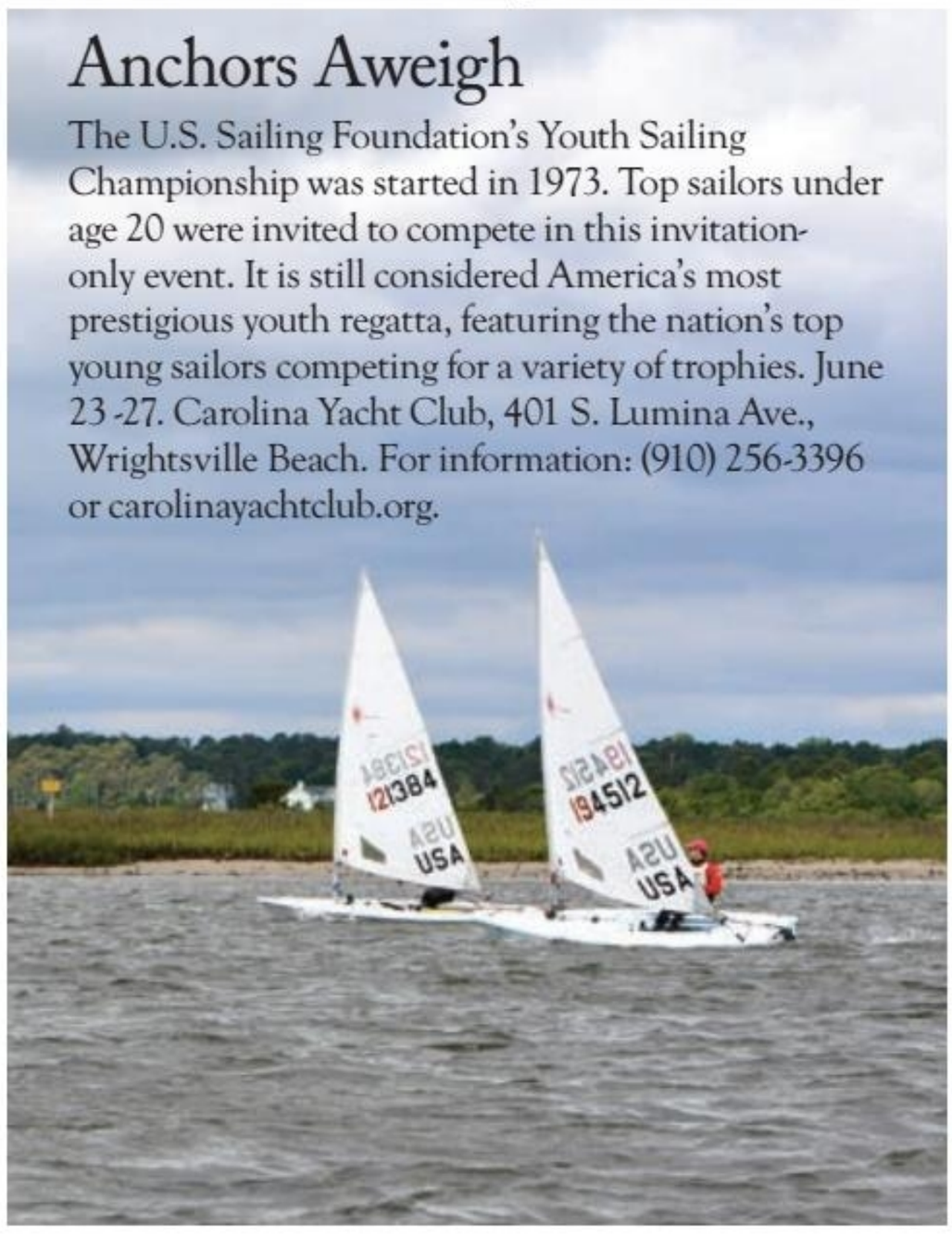
Little Pink Houses of Hope hosts an evening of Dining and Dancing on Water Street on June 10. Set on the river at the plaza in front of the federal building, the party will feature a Sunday supper, live entertainment and dancing under the stars. Proceeds benefit the nonprofit Little Pink Houses of Hope, which provides breast cancer patients and their families with free weeklong vacation retreats. Tickets: $100. June 10, 6 p.m. Riverfront Park, 5 N. Water St., Wilmington. For information: (336) 213-4733 or littlepink.org/wilmington.

The North Carolina Blueberry Festival

Historic downtown Burgaw is the setting for the 15th annual North Carolina Blueberry Festival, which now attracts more than 30,000 visitors each year and is truly an extravaganza of all things blueberry. Among them: an annual blueberry scholarship pageant; a bumper crop of produce, pies, jams and other blueberry recipes from local farmers; a 5K run; the Tour de Blueberry, a non-competitive cycling event with routes ranging from nine to 64 miles, organized by Cape Fear Cyclists. And don't forget the Whole Hog Barbecue Cookoff, as well as a car show, model train show and a BMX stunt show! Admission is free. June 15 and 16, Burgaw. See website for locations and event details. For info: (910) 259-2007 or ncblueberryfestival.com.

Anchors Aweigh

The U.S. Sailing Foundation's Youth Sailing Championship was started in 1973. Top sailors under age 20 were invited to compete in this invitation-only event. It is still considered America's most prestigious youth regatta, featuring the nation's top young sailors competing for a variety of trophies. June 23 -27. Carolina Yacht Club, 401 S. Lumina Ave., Wrightsville Beach. For information: (910) 256-3396 or carolinayachtclub.org.



A Touch of Beethoven

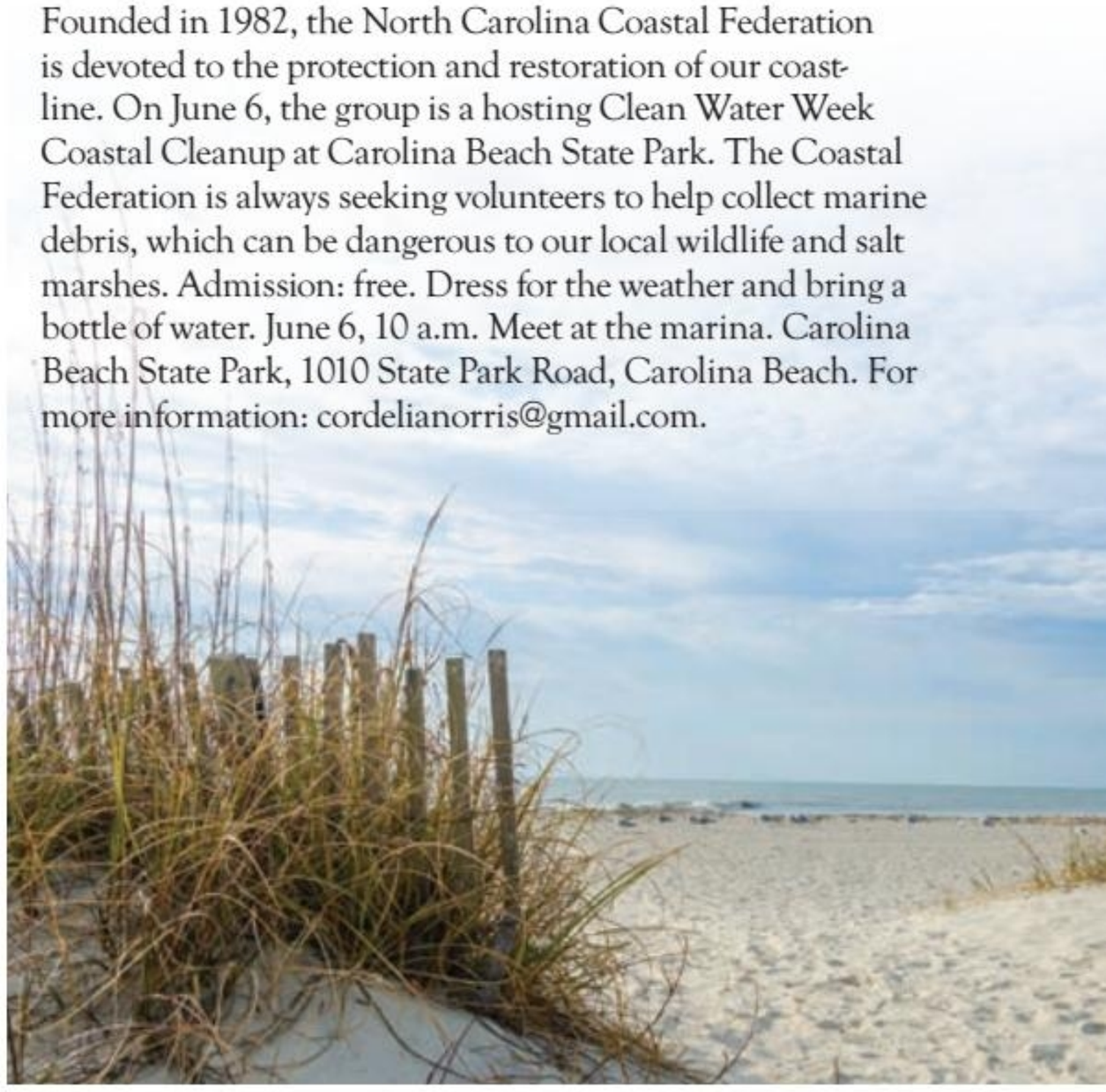
Founded in 2009 by Wilmington artist Christine Farley and cellist Stephen Famil, the Port City Music Festival celebrates its 10th anniversary this year with a series of free concerts of classical masterworks accessible to all at various locations across Wilmington. This year's featured composer is Ludwig van Beethoven. Admission is free. June 3 - 10. See website for programs and venues. For information: (910) 239-9450 or portcitymusicfestival.org.

Wilmington Farmers Market

Tired of those suspicious-looking piles of Florida tomatoes? Want to support the local food economy? Check out the new Wilmington Farmers Market at Tidal Creek, a weekly gathering of vetted vendors with fresh produce straight from their farms. A partial list of participants: Black River Organic Farm, Red Beard Farms, Humble Roots Farm, Shelton Herb Farm, Changin' Ways Farm, Turner Family Farms. Sign up for the weekly newsletter for advanced news of the coming weekend's harvest. Saturdays, 8 a.m. - 1 p.m. year-round. Wilmington Farmers Market at Tidal Creek, 5329 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. For info: thewilmingtonfarmersmarket.com.

Coastal Cleanup

Founded in 1982, the North Carolina Coastal Federation is devoted to the protection and restoration of our coastline. On June 6, the group is a hosting Clean Water Week Coastal Cleanup at Carolina Beach State Park. The Coastal Federation is always seeking volunteers to help collect marine debris, which can be dangerous to our local wildlife and salt marshes. Admission: free. Dress for the weather and bring a bottle of water. June 6, 10 a.m. Meet at the marina. Carolina Beach State Park, 1010 State Park Road, Carolina Beach. For more information: cordelianorris@gmail.com.



On Top of Old Baldy

The Bald Head Island Lighthouse (also known as Old Baldy) is more than 200 years old and is the oldest lighthouse still standing in North Carolina. The Old Baldy Foundation on Bald Head Island will host the second annual North Carolina Treasures Weekend, a celebration of culture, history and cuisine, beginning with a Swine and Spirits Dinner on June 1. Chef Mark Berruet of Sweet Bay Catering will prepare a whole-hog menu with a Heritage Farms Cheshire hog. The cocktail hour will feature North Carolina distillers, among them Durham Distillery and Seventeen Twelve Spirits. On June 2, the Bald Head Island Club will be the setting for the Gala in White, featuring a buffet, silent auction and live music from the The Magnificients Band. Proceeds benefit the Old Baldy Foundation. The Bald Head Island Club, Salt Meadow Trail, Bald Head Island. For info: (910) 457-7481 or oldbaldy.org.

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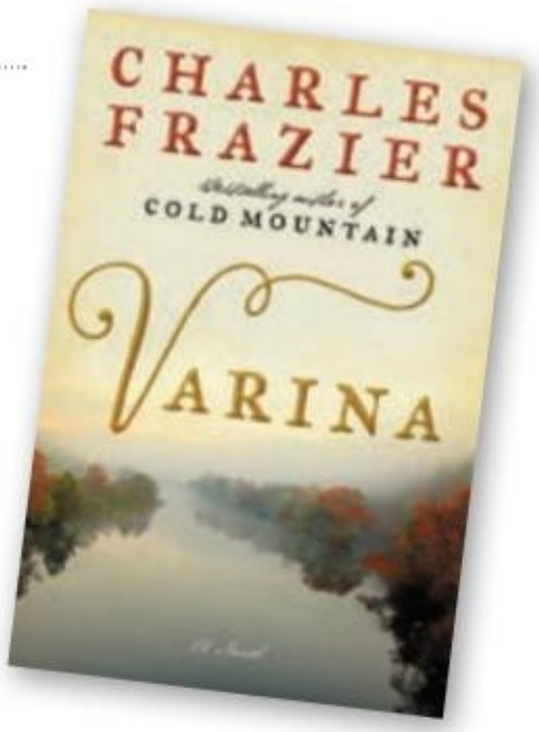
Triumphant Return

Frazier is back with a new historical novel that reads like poetry



By D.G. Martin

Charles Frazier's blockbuster first novel, *Cold Mountain*, marked its 20th anniversary last year. It won the National Book Award in 1997 and became a popular and Academy Award-winning film starring Nicole Kidman, Jude Law and Renée Zellweger. From *Cold Mountain* and the books that followed, *Thirteen Moons* and *Nightwoods*, Frazier gained recognition as North Carolina's most admired writer of literary fiction since Thomas Wolfe.

Frazier's many fans celebrated the April release of his latest novel, *Varina*, based on the life of Confederate President Jefferson Davis' wife. But, because his most recent previous novel, *Nightwoods*, had come out in 2011, they wondered why he had made them wait so long. The simple answer: Frazier refuses to work fast. Every word of every chapter of every one of his four books was reviewed, rewritten, replaced and restored by him to make the final product just right. It's that process that makes *Varina* a book so full of rich and lovely prose it could pass for poetry. And well worth the wait.

Because *Varina* is historical fiction, Frazier faced a challenge similar to the one Wiley Cash encountered in his recent book, *The Last Ballad*. Writing about a real person — textile union activist Ella May Wiggins in Cash's case or Varina Davis in Frazier's book — limits an author's freedom to create and imagine without limits. The facts of history set firm and solid boundaries.

On the other hand, those real historical facts provide the framework within which Cash and Frazier, both, have succeeded in developing interesting and believable characters. *Varina* takes us back to the 1800s and the Civil War, a period it shares with *Cold Mountain* and *Thirteen Moons*. The central character of the new book is Varina Howell Davis, until now an obscure Civil War footnote. Frazier refers to her as "V."

He builds V's story around an unusual fact. While living in Richmond as first lady of the Confederacy, she took in a young mixed race boy she called Jimmie. She raised him alongside her own children. At the end of the Civil War, Union troops took 6-year-old Jimmie away from V, and she never learned what happened to him.

Frazier begins his story 40 years later at a resort-spa-hotel-hospital in Saratoga Springs, New York, where V is residing. James Blake, a light-skinned, middle-aged African-American, has read about Jimmie. His memories are very dim, but he begins to think he might be that same Jimmie and sets out to visit V at Saratoga Springs.

When Blake calls on V at the hotel, she is suspicious, having been the victim of various con artists who attempted to exploit her fame. But something clicks. "She works at remembrance, looks harder at Blake's broad forehead, brown skin, curling hair graying at the temples. She tries to cast back four decades to the war."

Blake visits V for several Sundays, and Frazier builds his story on the growing friendship and the memories they share. During the course of Blake's visits, V remembers her teenage years in Natchez, Mississippi; her courtship and marriage to Davis; life on his plantation while Davis is often away in military service or politics; living in Washington as wife of a U.S. senator and Cabinet official; being the first lady of the Confederacy; and her post-Civil War life when she becomes friends with the widow of Ulysses Grant and writes a column for a New York newspaper.

These are important subplots, but the book's most compelling action develops in V's flight from Richmond when it falls to Union troops at the end of the Civil War. In the book's second chapter, V and Blake begin to recall their journey southward. As V prepares to leave Richmond on the train, Davis tells her she would be coming back soon because "General Lee would find a way." But Lee does not find a way this time.

V's family, including Jimmie, servants and Confederate officials, travel to Charlotte, where an angry mob confronts them at the rail station. Evading the mob there, they "traveled southwest down springtime Carolina roads, red mud and pale leaves on poplar trees only big as the tip of your little finger, a green haze at the tree line. They fled like a band of Gypsies — a ragged little caravan of saddle horses and wagons with hay and horse feed and a sort of kitchen wagon and another for baggage. Two leftover battlefield ambulances for those not a-saddle. The band comprised a white woman, a black woman, five children, and a dwindling supply of white men — which V called Noah's animals, because as soon as they realized the war was truly lost, they began departing two by two."

Their goal is escape to Florida and then Havana.

Supplies have shrunk and their money has become worthless. Rumors circulate that their caravan has a hoard of gold from the Confederate treasury and that there will be a big reward for their capture.

Frazier writes, "In delusion, bounty hunters surely rode hard behind faces, dark in the shadows of deep hat brims, daylight striking nothing but jawbones and chin grizzle, dirty necks, and once-white shirt collars banded with extrusions of their own amber grease."

Like Inman's trek toward home in *Cold Mountain*, V and her companions confront adventure and terror at almost every stop.

OMNIVOROUS READER

In Georgia, low on food and soaking wet, the group finds refuge in a seemingly deserted plantation house. As they settle in, two or three families of formerly enslaved people appear, accompanied by the son of their former owner, Elgin, a "white boy, who grew less beard than the fuzz on a mullein leaf."

Elgin sasses and threatens two former Confederate naval cadets, Bristol and Ryland, who are accompanying V's group. He blames them for losing the war.

Ryland responds in kind, "You've not ever worn a uniform or killed anybody, and you're not going to start now. Have you even had your first drink of liquor?"

Ryland and Bristol laugh when the boy reaches into his pants and pulls out a Derringer pistol and points it at Ryland.

"And then Elgin twitched a finger, almost a nervous impulse, and an awful instant of time later, Ryland was gone for good."

Frazier writes that Ryland had been transformed in a matter of seconds "to being a dead pile of meat and bones and gristle without a spark. Three or four swings of the pendulum and he was all gone."

Instantly Bristol guns down Elgin. Before moving on, V's group and the former slaves bury Elgin and Ryland, two more unnecessary casualties in a war that simply would not end.

With V's group back on the road, we know their attempt to escape is doomed to failure. But Frazier's dazzling descriptions give us hope, hope that is quickly dashed when Federal troops capture V and take Jimmie away from her.

Readers who loved Frazier's luscious language and compelling characters in his earlier books will agree that *Varina* was worth the long wait.

But what are they to make of V, her husband, and the Confederate heroes who are bit players in the new book?

Perhaps Frazier leaves a clue with the final words, as James Blake remembers what V says to him on one of their visits at Saratoga Springs.

"When the time is remote enough nobody amounts to much."

D.G. Martin hosts North Carolina Bookwatch, *which airs Sundays at noon and Thursdays at 5 p.m. on UNC-TV.*

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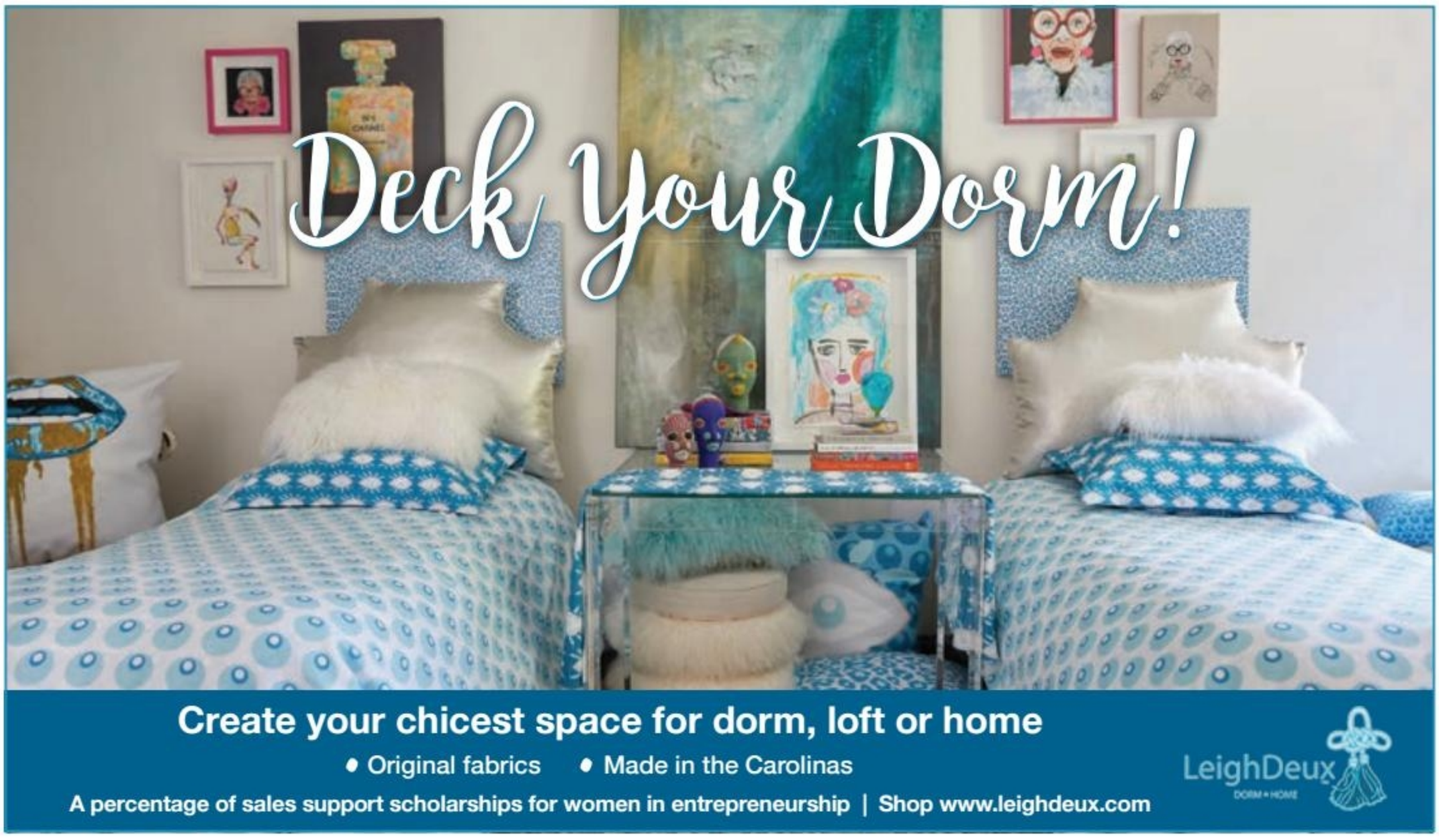
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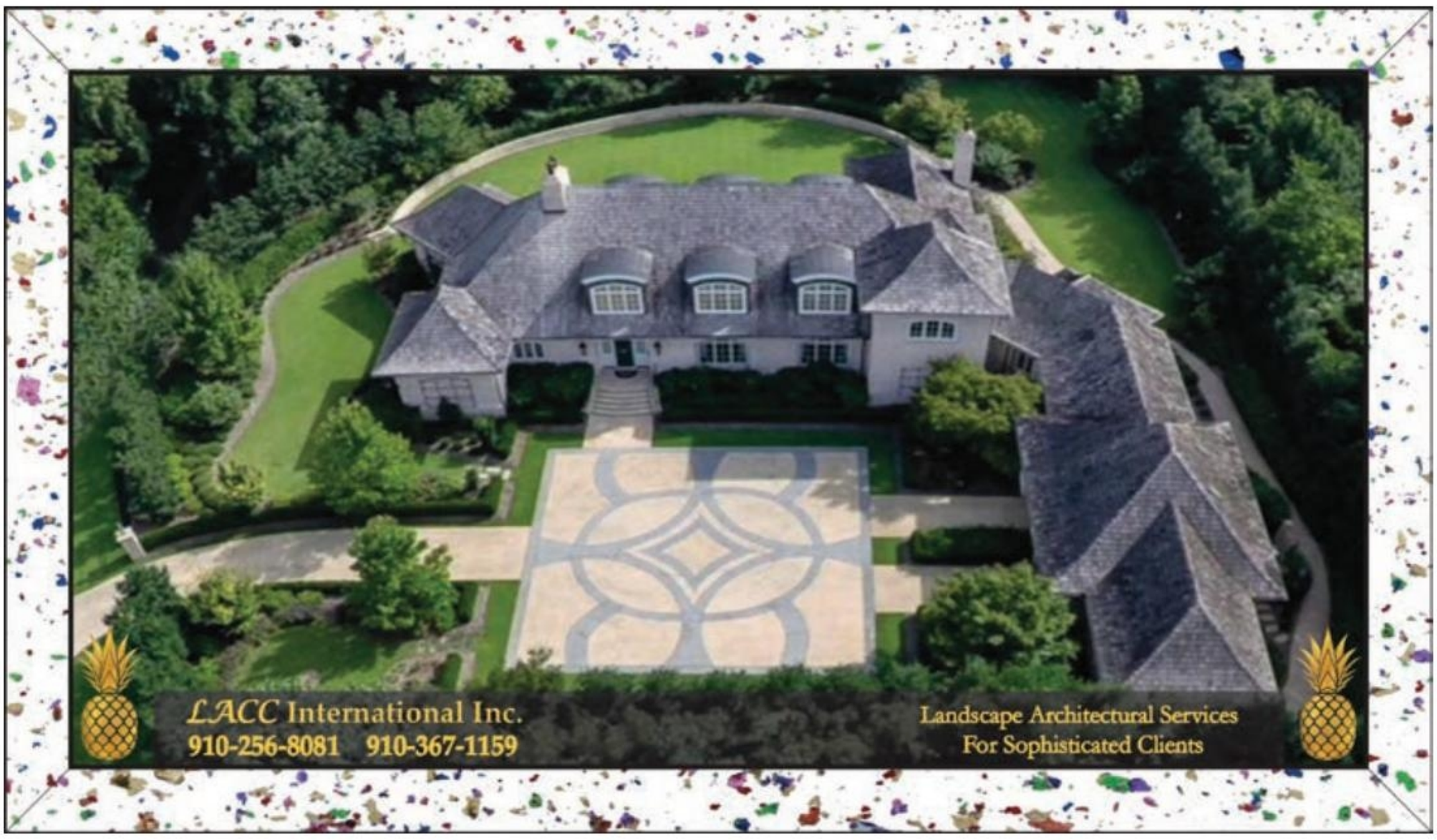
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The Stories of Life

Told in sweet vignettes

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW SHERMAN

By Dana Sachs

Last December, just before the holidays, a group of people gathered in the coffee shop of Wilmington's Cambridge Village retirement community to celebrate the publication of a new anthology of writing, *Vignettes from the Village*. Most of the authors — all Cambridge Village residents — attended. Their poetry, essays and fiction veered from light and funny to searingly personal. In a piece titled "Safe Kept Memories," Rose Anna Mazzotta describes how a grieving widow remembers her husband picking up her hand and "rub(ing) her palm with his thumb." In Mary Starks' "And John Paul Makes Five," an errant toddler falls out a window and his older sister catches him by the foot. Suddenly, two men appear and save the baby. "Do you believe in miracles?" the author writes. "I do."

Bev Moss Haedrich watched the contributors look at the anthology and felt a swell of pride. The writers were her students in a workshop called The Write Stuff. When the session began nine months earlier, many of them expressed a nervousness that Bev often sees among new writers. "They haven't cured a disease," she says, "so they don't feel they have anything worth sharing."

Bev and I are talking about the workshop over lunch at Two Guys Grille in Porters Neck. To ease her students' concerns, she tells me, she emphasized the value of their ideas and the need to record their experiences. Their work didn't need to reach a wide audience; they could focus on recording their lives for their loved ones. "It's important for them to share these stories," she tells me.

Bev also wanted to help each budding writer access their creativity and inspiration, so she assigned exercises. Presenting the first part of a sentence, for example, she had them write from there:

"The very first time I received flowers, I –"
"The neighborhood I grew up in was filled with –"

Responses varied in many ways. Students ranged in age from 65 to 95. Some, Bev says, returned "to a time when they were 5 or 6 years old." Others explored more recent experiences. In an essay called "Just Irene," writer Irene Laslavic recounted beloved moments of travel: "Overlooking the water lily pond from the little Japanese green bridge in the rain, I saw Monet's Giverny."

Certainly, aging can shift people's thinking toward physical pain, but Bev's students seemed intensely engaged with the world around them. "They're actually experiencing new things every day," she tells

me. In an essay called "And the Lions Play," Eileen Langley describes a trip she took to Africa in 2010. One day, two people – Langley and a young dentist – joined an organized walk through lion country, while everyone else in their group stayed behind. "The dentist's wife told *me* to bring (her husband) back safely!" Eileen recounts drily, "and I was 88 at the time!"

Bev regards *Vignettes* as a gift for future generations. "Our children may not be interested," she admits, "but our grandchildren or great-grandchildren might." She also values the act of writing. During retirement, "it would be very easy to just sit around and wait, you know? I wanted them to think in present tense."

Bev herself began writing and teaching as a teenager. In high school, her essay "On Lowering the Voting Age to 18" won recognition in a national contest. Not long after, her family moved to Taiwan for three years, and she began tutoring children and adults in English. Since then, her professional life has included both magazine journalism and running writing workshops. "I've always loved teaching," she tells me. "You can go in with the most prepared lesson and something will kick in and take it in a whole new direction that's so much better."

This kind of open-minded attitude makes Bev a fine companion at Two Guys Grille. The restaurant seems, at first, like a typical joint, serving starters, salads, sandwiches and burgers. The menu, though, offers unexpected combinations and flavors, and Bev greets each like we're on a great adventure. The Southwest Black Bean Salad – on the surface an unassuming blend of chopped veggies, beans and cheese over mixed greens – reveals itself to be a circus of crunch and heat. "Jalapeño poppers," she announces after a couple of bites. "It's

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kind of like one of those."

We may not be stepping into a lion's den, but we're brave enough to order the restaurant's most surprising option. The Bleu Berry Bacon Burger combines bacon and melted blue cheese with — no kidding — blueberry jam, jalapeños and a knot of grilled onions. "Who the hell is going to put blueberry jam on a burger?" Bev asks. In fact, it's a rich, messy, wildly flavored concoction. After a bite, Bev calls it "a sweet and savory," which may explain why, according to our server, the dish has become a hit.

As the Cambridge Village workshop approached its end, Bev began editing and compiling the manuscript that would eventually become *Vignettes*. "It took, oh my gosh, a full week," she says, adding that many submissions arrived the old-fashioned way, as handwriting on paper. She had to finish quickly, she tells me, because her students "wanted to include it with their Christmas presents to their families."

Throughout the workshop, some writers had been shy about public readings. "I couldn't possibly read mine," one said, to which Bev reminded them, "We're all unique. We celebrate all of it." At a book launch party in February, friends and family members gathered over wine and cheese to celebrate the publication, and the just-published writers stood up, one by one, to read their work.

Irene Laslavic, who had written so lovingly of Giverny, didn't make it to the party. She died in December. But on the afternoon of the party, her husband arrived at the event with their two daughters. When it was Irene's turn to stand in front of the audience, he took her place and read the story of Monet's garden himself.

To Bev, *Vignettes* represents more than a workshop souvenir. The

book's archive lives, which families can treasure. Her sense of the value of the process may explain why, when she handed out the first copies of *Vignettes*, Bev tied a festive ribbon around every volume and included a pen with each copy she gave out. Her students had transformed themselves into authors, and once they had their copies, she says, "I knew they'd want to sign them."

Two Guys Grille is located at 8254 Market Street in Porters Neck. For more information, visit www.twoguysgrille.com or call (910) 686-3231. If you'd like to know more about Bev Moss Haedrich's The Write Stuff workshops, contact Bev at bevsletterproject@gmail.com.

Dana Sachs's latest novel, The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores, online and throughout Wilmington.*

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PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY CROSS

By Tony Cross

Four years ago, I was in my final couple of hours of wrapping up a Saturday night behind the bar. It was busy and I was slinging drinks and carrying on the type of banter that goes with the territory. Usually after 8 p.m. on a weekend night, most of my guests were relaxed enough to tolerate, maybe even laugh at, my antics. In between the chaos, two gentlemen took seats at the bar. After greeting them, I turned around to grab a bottle of rye and make a drink. "Do you guys carry TOPO spirits?" one of them asked. It had to have been some sort of divine intervention, because my first thought was, "Yeah, but you're the only person to ask for it." TOPO vodka was the first local spirit I carried, and I was a little disappointed that guests weren't flocking to support a local distillery. Another way of putting it is: My feelings got hurt when guests didn't like what I did. But instead of talking first and thinking later, I said, "Actually, yeah, we carry their vodka. It's good stuff." Good job, Tony. Not being a smart-ass paid off for *once*. I had just met the owners of Top of the Hill Distillery, Scott Maitland and Esteban McMahan.

Since that night, I've formed a relationship with TOPO's spirit guide, McMahan. No one in North Carolina's distillery game seems busier than him. If you follow TOPO on Instagram (handle: topoorganicspirits), then you know exactly what I mean. If I had to guess, I'd say that he's doing three to four events a week across the state. The guy is everywhere. And thanks to McMahan's work ethic, I was able to debut my carbonated cocktails on draught to a ton of people when he asked me to bartend with him at an event two years ago. Since then, we've collaborated a few times and he always makes a point to let me know when he's in the vicinity. The last time I saw McMahan was in March when he wanted to link up so he could turn me on to TOPO's new whiskey. After having a drink and catching up, he gifted me a bottle of their organic Spiced Rum and Reserve Carolina Straight Wheat Whiskey.

I first got a taste of TOPO's Spiced Rum last fall during Pepperfest in Carrboro. McMahan had invited my friend and co-worker, Carter, and me to come out and use pepper-infused TOPO vodka with our Reverie strawberry-ginger beer. We had a blast, and our cocktail even

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took first place. While we were there, we got to see the TOPO crew unveil their newest spirit, the Spiced Rum. A few months prior to Pepperfest, the guys over at the distillery were still tweaking the rum. They'd given me a taste at the time, and it wasn't bad. When I got to try it at Pepperfest, it was clear they had gotten it just right. On the nose, there's vanilla, orange, and the slightest whiff of banana. On the palate, orange and vanilla are still present, but I can also taste spices — cinnamon is definitely there, clove is subtle, and allspice seems to round it out. McMahan says their rum is "N.C.'s only USDA Certified Organic rum. It is distilled from organic evaporated cane juice and molasses, and spiced with organic fruit and spices. Unlike most spiced rums, it is not heavily sweetened post-distillation, nor are there artificial colors and flavors." Heck, the rum was even awarded a bronze medal at the American Distilling Institute Competition this year. I would suspect that rum purists might not go crazy about it, but I think it's fun to play around with, and goes well in a variety of mixed drinks. You can definitely go the Dark n' Stormy route, or you can fiddle around with something like I did below:

Kind of Blue

2 ounces TOPO Spiced Rum
3/4 ounce pineapple juice
1/2 ounce lime juice
1/4 ounce simple syrup (2:1)
2 ounces Reverie Ginger Beer

Take all ingredients (sans ginger beer) and pour into a cocktail shaker with ice. Shake like hell, and then pour two ounces of ginger beer into the shaker. Dump everything into a rocks glass. Garnish with fresh grated nutmeg (using a microplane).

As much as I like to stay busy, I can do lazy, too. Case in point: that bottle of TOPO's Reserve Carolina Straight Wheat Whiskey. I didn't want to open it until I could take a picture of it for this issue's column. I've had this bottle staring at me from my kitchen counter since March. All I had to do was take a picture of it. Well, I did. Tonight. And I opened it. Tonight. One of my friends has been telling me how good this whiskey is. I'll be hearing "I told you so" sometime later this week.

I asked McMahan about TOPO's new whiskey, and he had this to say: "The TOPO Organic Reserve Carolina Straight Wheat Whiskey is N.C.'s first and only locally sourced straight whiskey. It is distilled from a 100 percent wheat mash bill of USDA Certified Organic soft red winter wheat from the Jack H. Winslow Farms in Scotland Neck, N.C. It is distilled below 80 percent ABV, barrel aged in #3 char new American oak barrels two to four years at no more than 125 proof, and then it's non chill-filtered." I know, he forgot to tell me how smooth this whiskey is. Congratulations are in order, too. McMahan was just notified that TOPO placed *gold* in the San Francisco Spirits Competition. No drink recipe for this one, folks. If you must, an old-fashioned. I'll take mine neat with half an ice cube. Cheers!

Tony Cross is a bartender who runs cocktail catering company Reverie Cocktails *in Southern Pines.*

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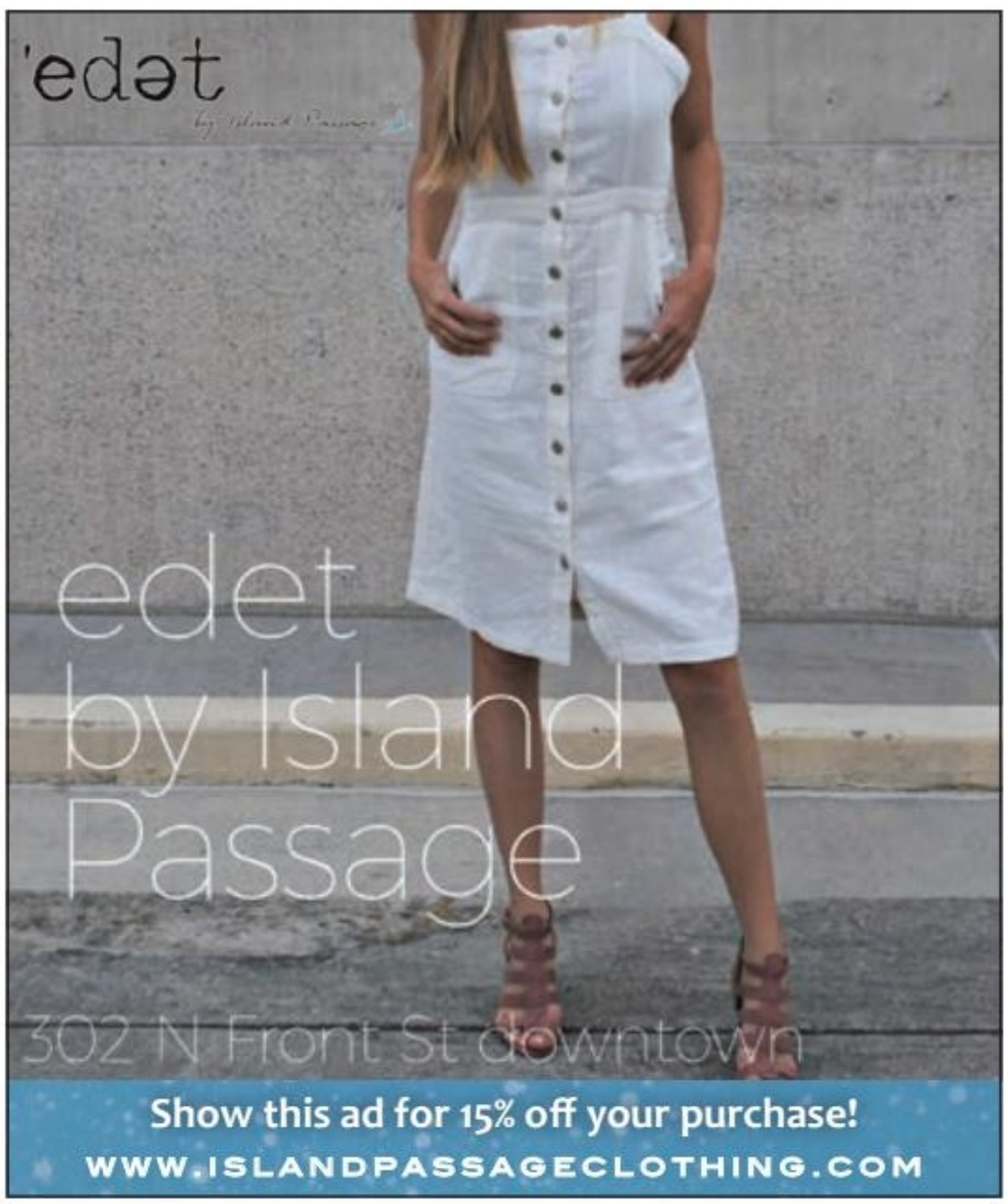
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Agent of Change

How Craig Stinson and nonprofit Arts Friendly aim to be a hub for the Port City's arts community

By Jason Frye

On a sunny spring day, after the madness of the Azalea Festival has subsided and before the crush of summer visitors has plotted routes to Wilmington into their GPSs, Craig Stinson stands on the corner of 3rd and Princess, looking from Thalian Hall to the courthouse and back. His eye is appraising, but not judgmental; he simply takes in the city around him, processes it with a smile, and shifts his gaze. "Wilmington's my hometown, you know," he says. "I've always loved it. That's why I went to school here, why I left and why I came back."

Stinson's a rare entrepreneur in the Port City: Rather than look at Wilmington, and the whole of New Hanover County, as a real estate plum ripe for the picking, he views the region in terms of the arts. His new nonprofit, Arts Friendly, has the potential to more firmly establish Wilmington on North Carolina's (and dare we say the Southeast's) arts map.

"Wilmington has an exceptional arts scene and a very involved arts community," says Stinson. "For the size of the town, we have an incredible number of people involved in the arts, from the fine arts level to the enthusiastic novice, and that's what an arts community needs to grow and thrive."

At first, his statement seems incongruous with the Wilmington many of us know and that many of our visitors see in the commercial district (think paintings of bright red flip-flops that read "It's Beach O'Clock"). But as Stinson rattles off a list of the galleries, public art installations and mini-art festivals around the county, it becomes evident that he's spot-on in this assessment. "More importantly, this is a community that encourages creativity. There's a broad spectrum of skill among our established and developing artists, and they're not afraid to learn from one another. That makes the overall arts culture in Wilmington one that welcomes anyone who wants to participate," he says.

The Coastal Carolina Clay Guild, a wood-turners group, the Wilmington Arts Association, groups of playwrights, fiction and poetry and nonfiction groups, dance troupes, short-film makers, musical jam sessions of a dozen genres represent only a blip on Wilmington's art radar. "Then we have fine artists, the ones who sell paintings for hundreds or thousands of dollars in galleries across the region. Add to that the tier of fine artists who sell their work exclusively in galleries outside the area," says Stinson. "And then we can start talking about film and theater. The beautiful thing about those communities is the collaborative aspect. It takes so many people to put together a successful production for the stage or screen and both theater and film

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welcome new talent to come and audition. That collaborative, come-together spirit is a driver of the arts community here."

That spirit is also the driving force behind Arts Friendly. Stinson sees the organization as a way of branding the arts supporting community, and has gone so far as to secure a trademark for a "Certified Arts Friendly" seal — similar to those of the Better Business Bureau or Good Housekeeping — that designates businesses and nonprofits as Certified Arts Friendly. To obtain the certification, groups must apply and demonstrate a history of supporting the arts and a documented presence in the art world (among other requirements).

Along with the Certified Arts Friendly seal, Stinson has developed the Arts in Wilmington Awards, an annual ceremony that helps promote arts as a whole rather than specific genres of art. Rather than making it a popularity contest voted on by the people of Wilmington, Stinson has leveraged his extensive contacts in the art and arts administration worlds to evaluate nominees and select the award winners.

Because of his history as an arts administrator, Stinson's contacts in these worlds are deep and widespread. He began his academic career at UNC Wilmington, where he learned the beauty of oral histories and the value of folklore. With the help of a professor there, he transferred to UNC Chapel Hill to study folklore. A summer internship with the Smithsonian Institution helping with their Folklife Festival drew him deeper in, and working with Americorps in Arizona helping non-native English speakers learn the language and work toward their citizenship further opened his eyes to folklore and the beauty and value of tale telling. From there, Stinson went on to positions at the National Endowment for the Arts, the South Carolina Arts Commission, the Institute of Texan Cultures and a variety of state arts councils. He has brought all those lessons and best practices together to form Arts Friendly.

One of the functions of Arts Friendly is empowerment through finances, which is to say fundraising and the distribution of funds. "There's a sort of template for funding," he says. "Earned income — the price of

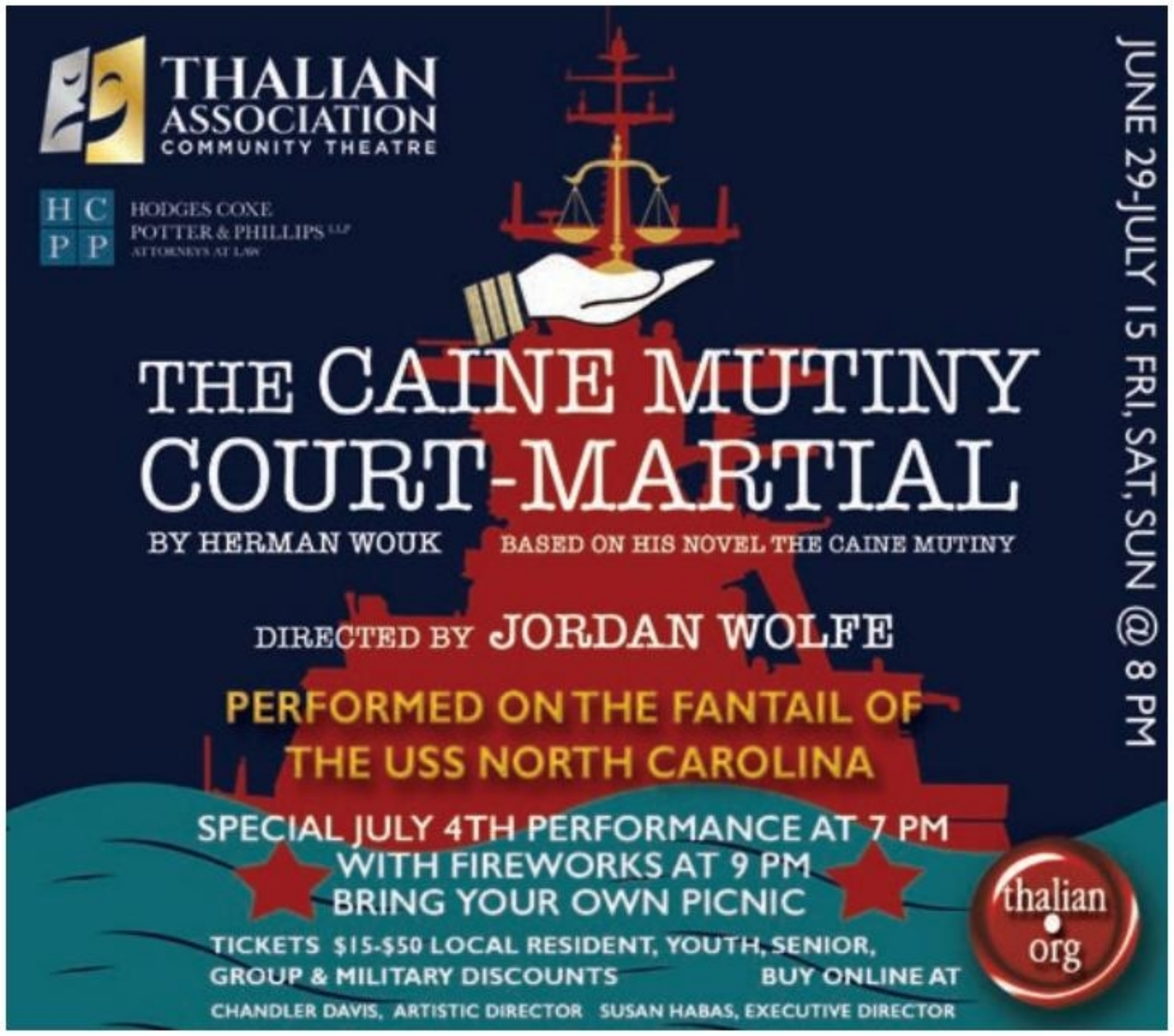
admission to a museum or a ticket to a performance — is one, membership is another, grants make up another portion, then you have corporate sponsorship and the municipal or government support." Every element is critical to funding a vibrant arts community, and with Arts Friendly, Stinson hopes to make up for some of the gaps Wilmington sees in that financial support structure, encourage more activity from certain partners, and win new partners to the cause.

It's not surprising that some of the funding gaps are on the municipal or government side, for as economies have retreated and funding for all programs have become more precious, the arts is an easy, and frequent, target. Think of school budgets. What's the first program they target when ensuring they can operate on a lean budget? It's not computers for the computer lab or athletic facilities; it's the arts and music programs. The same is true at the city, county and state levels.

Another leg missing from Wilmington arts funding is grants, which in part depend on national and state-level support that trickles down to local and regional arts councils. There's also a dearth of support in corporate giving. The Wilmington business community's support of local arts groups and guilds, the Arts Council, and even individual artists is, simply put, lacking. Does this lack of support represent a disconnect from the community, a lack of investment in the future of the community or the lack of an outlet— like Arts Friendly – that could provide an easy entry point into Wilmington's creative hive?

Stinson believes Arts Friendly can be just that: a hub for arts fundraising and fund distribution. The Certified Arts Friendly badge will make it easy to identify businesses and groups that support the arts, empowering consumers to support these businesses with their spending power. "Can Arts Friendly create a coalition of businesses and entities dedicated to art and then tie them to the community? We can. Can we be a change agent and help shape Wilmington's art scene to be more vibrant, more evident and more inclusive? Absolutely."

Jason Frye is a regular Salt *contributor. You can follow him on Instagram: @beardedwriter.*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A Visit With Miss Lillie

Time passes, but not the love you keep for a woman who shaped your life

By Bill Thompson

I happened to see Jason at the drugstore the other day, and he told me that his mama, Miss Lillie, was visiting him. Jason and I have been friends since we were small children, when Jason's family lived on my grandmother's farm in Chadbourn back in the 1950s. We used to go fishing together and whatever we caught Miss Lillie would cook for us. Best fish I ever ate.

When we were "puttin' in" tobacco (harvesting, tying the leaves to sticks and hanging them in the barn), Jason and I would be in charge of picking up the fallen leaves of green tobacco that fell around the barn during the process. We were about 5 or 6 years old. Miss Lillie was the disciplinarian who sometimes gave us both a spanking for "fooling around" when we were supposed to be working.

Sometimes my grandmother would let me go with Jason and Miss Lillie to the A.M.E. Zion church, which was just down the road from the farm. Miss Lillie sang in the choir, so she always put Jason and me on the front row so she could give us "the bad eye" if we misbehaved.

That all seemed like a long time ago, as Jason and I stood there in the drugstore. That's when he said: "You oughta go see Mama. She'd love to see you. Just go on over to the house and surprise her." So I did.

Jason lives on a country road just a few miles from me. I knocked on the door of the little brick house but didn't get an answer, so I went around to see if Miss Lillie might be in the backyard. As I came around the corner of the house I could hear her singing. I didn't recognize the song, but I could tell it was a gospel song from the lyrics: "*Lord, keep me going down a lonesome road. I can't make it by myself . . .*" Miss Lillie was just singing away as she hung white bed sheets on a clothesline.

"Miss Lillie, Jason's got a washer and dryer in that house. What you doing with this clothesline?"

A startled Miss Lillie turned to see who had called her name. With a frown on her face she asked, "Who you?"

I should have known she wouldn't recognize me. It had been almost 20 years since she had left to live with her daughter in Baltimore, but I was still kinda disappointed.

"It's William, Miss Lillie, from over at the farm in Chadbourn. Remember?"

"Oh, my goodness, William. You sure changed. You 'bout scared me to death," she said as she rushed over and gave me a big hug. One thing I noticed right away: Even after 50 years, Miss Lillie still smelled like talcum powder.

I may have changed a lot, but Miss Lillie hadn't changed much. She was still a tiny woman with short cropped hair that had turned

gray. She wore a simple print dress that hung loosely on her thin frame. She had on a pair of white socks stuffed into what looked like leather bedroom shoes.

"Lord, child, I didn't know what to think a white man come sneakin' up on me like that! You know I'm kinda timid anyway."

"Now, you know you're not timid, Miss Lillie. I remember you ran that tobacco barn crew like a drill sergeant. And you'd kill a snake with nothing but a garden hoe. And you sure didn't mind telling me and Jason what to do."

"Yeah, but y'all was good boys. You both turned out pretty good, so I musta done something right."

"We had good teachers like you, Miss Lillie."

"Come sit up here on the porch and tell me what you been doing."

Miss Lillie and I sat on the porch for a long time, reminiscing about the days when our families worked together, when we all shared threats of too much rain or not enough, tobacco barns that caught on fire, boiling peanuts in a wash pot in the back-yard, fishing in a "creek" that was really just a wide ditch, funerals and weddings of both families.

"Those were good times, weren't they, Miss Lillie?"

Miss Lillie didn't answer me right away. She sat in that rocking chair on her son's back porch and looked out across the corn field at the sun brushing the top of the pine trees. Finally, she said, "They was good times if we want 'em to be, William. At the time, we all just did the best we could. Some of us fared better than others 'cause we didn't expect much so we wasn't disap-pointed. Sometimes we kinda picky 'bout what we remember. We just remember the good. Sometimes we even think the bad was good. All depends on how we want it to be, I reckon. That's the way I want it to be, William. I want it to be good."

Me too, Miss Lillie.

Bill Thompson is a regular Salt *contributor. His newest novel,* Chasing Jubal, *a coming of age story in the 1950s Blue Ridge, is available where books are sold.*

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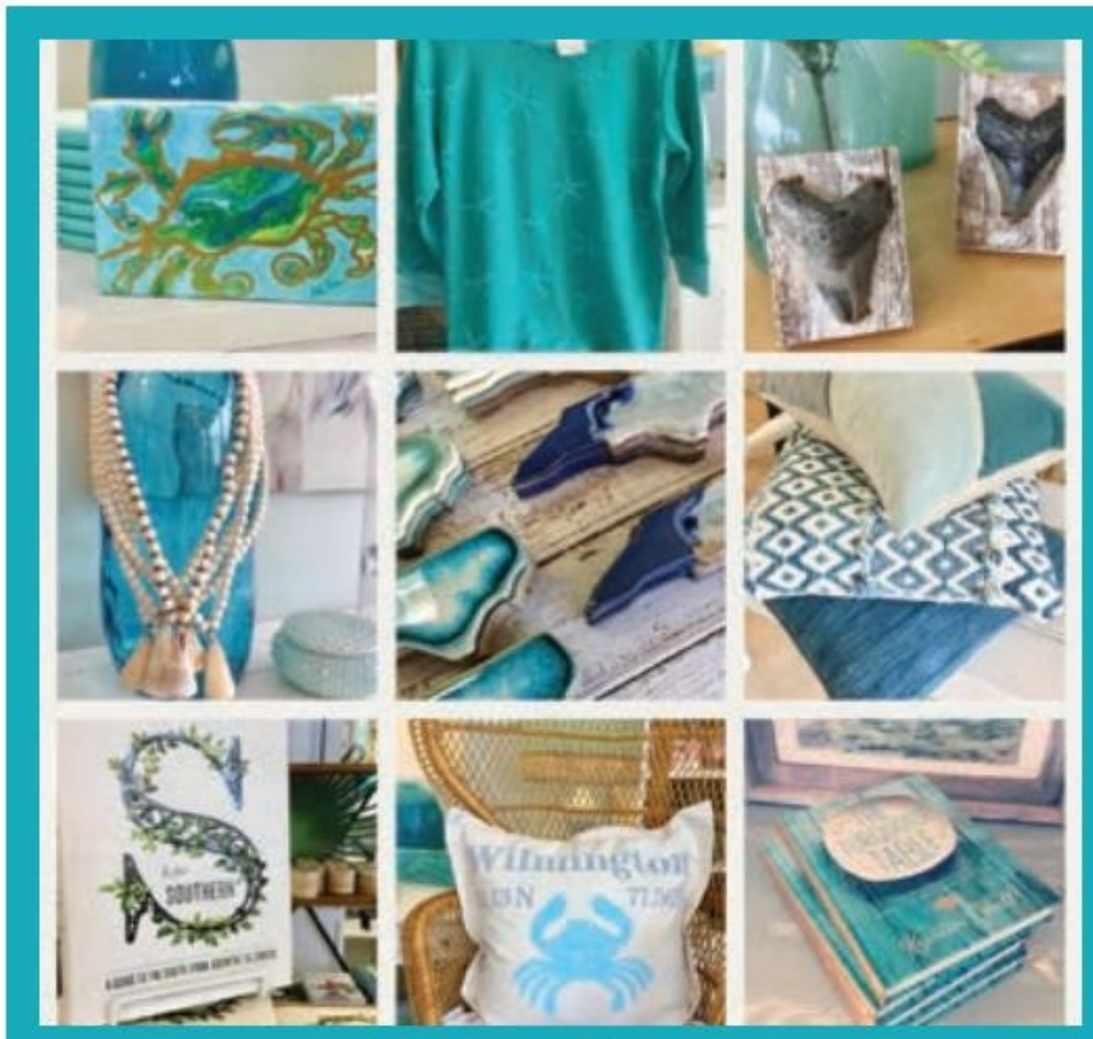

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Wood Stork

As another breeding season closes, this beautiful wader begins the southward migration

By Susan Campbell

Believe it or not, although it is hardly fall yet, the summer solstice will pass in late June, and for some of our birds the breeding season is already over. Many then begin to wander ahead of their southward migration a bit later in the season. During this time, we have a few species that actually move in a northerly direction at this time of year. The wood stork, a rare sight in North Carolina, is one of these.

Wood storks are large white wading birds, a bit smaller than great blue herons. They have heavy bills that curve at the tip. In flight, they are very distinctive. Not only do they fly with their heads and necks outstretched but their tails and flight feathers flash black. They are frequently spotted soaring high in the sky on thermals, not unlike hawks and vultures.

These birds forage not only for small fish, crustaceans and a variety of invertebrates but also for reptiles and amphibians as well and occasionally nestlings of other species. Wood storks are visual hunters that search for movement in the shallows. They also may sweep and probe with their bills in murky areas until they feel prey, and then they will snap their mandibles shut and swallow the food item whole. It is not unusual for them to shuffle with their feet and flick their wings to disturb potential meals in muddy water.

Unlike their European kin, storks here nest in trees, not on chimneys. Also, as opposed to legend, these birds do not mate for life but pair up on the breeding grounds each season. They can live a long time; however, the oldest known (banded) bird from Georgia was over 20 years old when it was re-sighted in South Carolina.

Stork's nests are bulky stick-built affairs located over water often in cypress trees. However, any sturdy wetland tree species may be utilized. Both parents are involved in construction. Grassy material will line the nest that is, quite uniquely, adhered together with guano. It will take almost two months for the one to five young to reach fledging. Not only will wood storks nest alongside others of their kind, but they tend to be found in colonies with heron, ibis and egret neighbors.

The wood stork is a rare sight in the Carolinas, only breeding locally in freshwater or brackish forested habitat. They prefer locations with an open canopy since they require a good bit of space in order to negotiate a landing. The only known location where they have been documented nesting (and that has been relatively recently) is on Lays Lake on private property in eastern Columbus County. Following fledging, however, family groups may move away from the nesting area to wet habitat where food is plentiful. In dry summers, that movement may be significant—and in any direction.

Historically, in our area, individuals show up annually at Twin Lakes in Sunset Beach by midsummer. They can reliably be found in and around the eastern pond. The birds seem to like probing the flats on the back side, away from golfers. Also look for them loitering in the stout trees along the shoreline into early fall. But do not be surprised if you happen on one or perhaps a small group in any wet area from marshes to farm ponds or golf course water hazards elsewhere. Wood storks are unique and majestic waders that definitely deserve a special look.

Susan would love to receive your wildlife sightings and photos at susan@ncaves.com.

PHOTOGRAPH BY DEBRA REGULA

Our Man About Town

Upon my word, this Wilmington named for me is a beautiful town — and a windy one! The kind residents I've met thus far have assured me the early spring has been uncommonly breezy. I have found it a trifle hard to maintain the order of my lengthy tresses — not a wig, let me assure you. (Although I am a Whig, if you know such history.)

It reminds me of trying to tame the blowhards and windbags in my homeland's House of Commons, of which I controlled — quite loosely — 300 years ago, when the empire was twitchily switching from a monarchy to a parliamentary system of governance.

I preferred to buff my fingernails (and still do) than buffet my delicate grey matter with such simian gabble.

You may as well shout down the wind, as many of you modern citizens are discovering with the ill-dressed buffoons in your central government. (You would do much better to reunite with Mother England. Kate and Andrew and all that.)

Nevertheless, I, Lord Spencer Compton, Earl of Wilmington, now see why my young protégé, Scottish-born confidant and royal governor Gabriel Johnston, moved this Colonial capital from Brunswick Town to these graceful nobs and knolls overlooking the Thames-like Cape Fear River in 1739 and had it named for me, his patron.

As a young and scholarly politician, Gabriel had stayed with me in my London manse. I had perfect confidence he would govern wisely and fairly. No other state governor has led as long or as kindly. (Look it up on your intelligent phones, upon which I see you gazing endlessly.)

I have been walking the streets and alleys here, and have ventured forth to the surrounding environs upon a motorcycle, which my Queen Street landlord has graciously taught me to ride. (There were no suitable domiciles on Earl Drive near the, ahem, Kings Grant neighborhood.)

I have adopted the rather scandalous practice of wearing short pants without hose, shoes with no tops and a simple shirt without any kind of overcoat or neckwear.

I have supped at many public houses — very few of note — and have walked the splendid beaches of Wrightsville, Topsail, Oak, Holden and Pleasure islands, finding shells and once, at low tide, two live starfish.

I am not alone in my failed fishing efforts. My surfing lessons will commence once the Atlantic shrugs off what I'm told is an uncommon spring frigidity that has also delayed angling pleasure.

Of course, one of my early stops was inside City Hall to determine the fate of the Spencer Compton Room, one of the very few vestiges of my influence on this area. It's my understanding it will become City Council offices, and I was hoping to meet with the mayor and city manager about the matter.

But even Lord Wilmington needs an appointment, said city managerial assistant Christine Compton. (No relation. I've been a confirmed bachelor.)

Duly noted outside of the city manager's office is the condition of my portrait, an oil painting.

I must say it looks as if it was dragged behind mules from Brunswick Town. The paint has faded and darkened to the point that my scarlet brocaded waistcoat looks like a dog's rug and my Order of the Garter medallion (the highest honor for chivalry in all of Britain) resembles a thrift store bauble.

My impeccably dressed mother, Mary Noel, would be mortified. "Medals confer mettle. Keep yours bright," she was wont to say.

Speaking of medals, I would like to bestow one for tireless and honorable service to 91-year-old Frank Conlon, whom I met while strolling on Nun Street.

He was smartly turned out in pressed khakis, an aquamarine polo shirt and straw hat, pushing a smart wheeled walker as he exercised on a flawless April afternoon.

The reason both King Georges championed me, along with many Whigs and Tories (today's liberals and conservatives), was because I could keep the wheels of the realm and distant Colonies turning.

Mr. Conlon, I've discovered, served as a quiet wheel-turner on City Council and for the battleship across the Cape Fear. He is one of the reasons Wilmington has its grand river walk and a reborn downtown. It was a distinct pleasure to visit with this fine gentleman of advancing years and sterling manners.

Similarly, I was quite pleased to make the acquaintance of Bill Sue while dining with the commoners at Shirley's Diner in Leland. (That establishment certainly dispels the oft-repeated myth that blacks and whites don't mix well in the South.)

"Johnny Cash got the money, I got the name," Bill Sue quipped of his surname.

He was the longtime Brunswick County commissioner, now 83, his pale blue eyes nearly blinded by macular degeneration. He was being squired about by longtime friend Tom Williams, a fellow

ILLUSTRATION BY ROMEY PETITE

beekeeper and retired printer who made Sue's first campaign posters a quarter-century ago.

As county commissioner before the growing boom here, Sue was instrumental in pressing the county to get in the sewage business. There was no way for a rush of new residents to occur without a network of sewer systems and treatment plants.

"You dig down a couple feet and you've got water," he explained over a fried pork chop.

He was also at the helm when hunks of the Route 211 corridor were rezoned to make way for the empire-size, upscale residential developments such as the town of St. James.

I admire those who can see what's needed for future health and growth. It was my gift, why George II insisted I become the realm's second prime minister. Even if it killed me.

Now, Sue said, it's roads and bridges the area will crave. My exciting motorcycling in the area screamed in agreement.

This gentleman invited me to his farm and gifted me with three bottles of his homemade wine: a light muscatel, an easy strawberry and a hefty white.

Days later, I encountered a most ebullient fellow wearing only short swimming pants, running shoes and sunglasses. He stood in the front yard of what appeared to be a haunted house at the corner of Ann and Front streets.

He is reputed to be a local menace, a Scofflaw of the First Order. It seems everyone in Wilmington has a strong opinion of his character.

By his own account, Peter Koke has been locked up "over 100 times." He's a developer of sorts, specializing in demolition after natural disasters.

One might say he's the natural disaster. The 52-year-old Long Island native was convicted of insurance fraud here in February, the same month we heard news of an investigation by the California licensing board into his activities after the wildfires in Santa Rosa.

He waved it off: the price of being the prince of catastrophe.

This fellow Koke has vim and a dim view of permits from the Crown. When I asked if he had a Certificate of Authenticity for the work he's doing at the historic corner house, he replied that the only pertinent desire is preserving it.

"Every jerk in town wanted to tear it down," he told me with gusto.

Even though at one point he was staring at $30,000 in fines because of his I'll-do-it-my-way style, he said, work has clearly progressed. The energetic and chatter-filled tour he gave me showed this man has skills and a certain genius for mastering disaster, quite similar to the current U.S. president's modus operandi.

"I can see the finish line," he said of the house, which he calls "my gift to the community."

I left him to his work and dreams, thinking that if I had a swampy colony filled with snakes, alligators and deathly infections, I would send Peter Koke and expect survival, if not success.

But I wouldn't want to know the details.

In closing, my loyal subjects, I sincerely apologize to the Azalea Parade festival committee for not making myself available for a Lord Spencer Compton float. All forward-dressing residents would clamor to be aboard.

Next year, of course. — *Spencer Compton*

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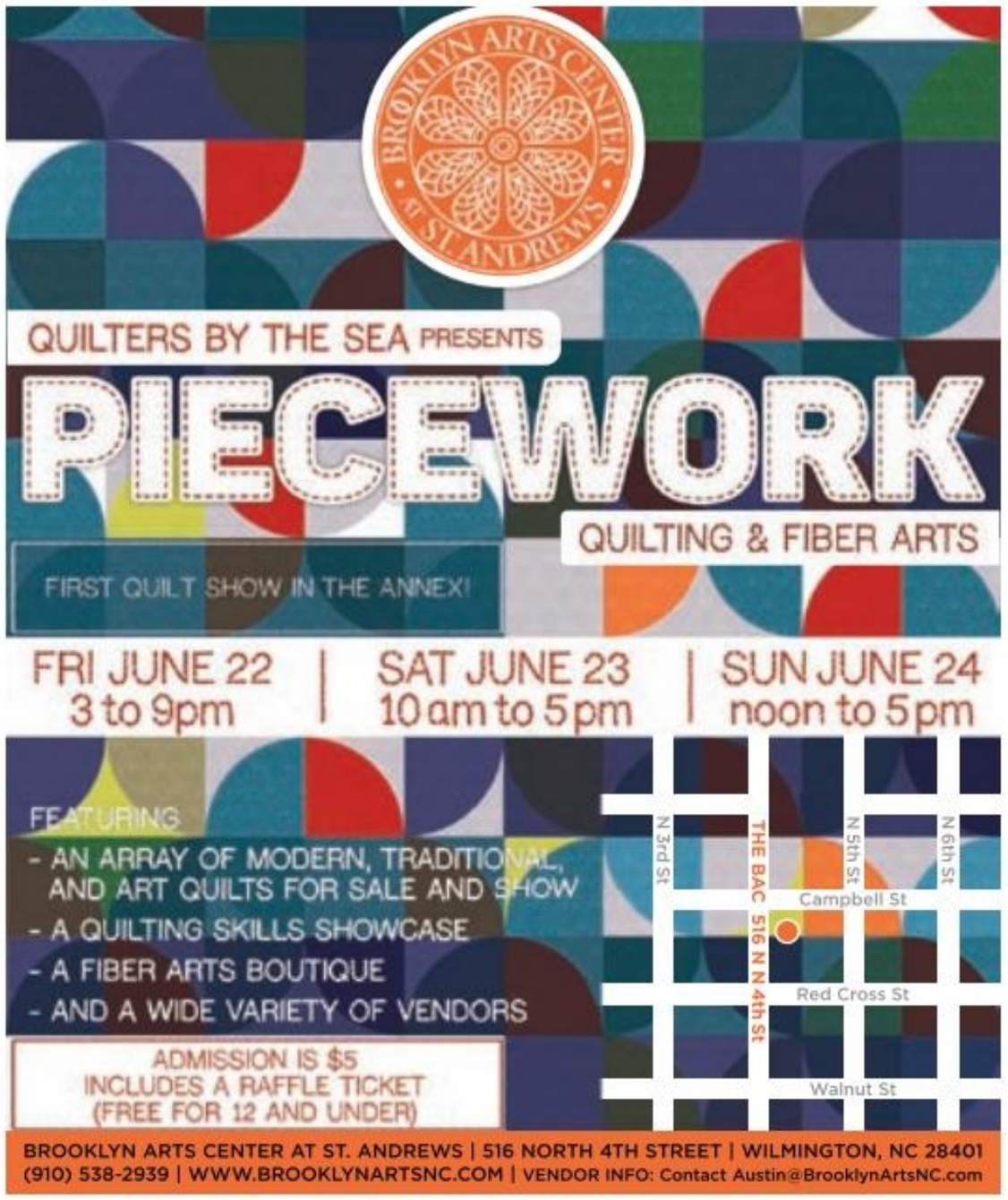
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Peaches

are what she wanted in the end
said they reminded her of South
Carolina that summer she was
fifteen, living with her Auntie
Josephine in a white clapboard
house at the end of a dirt road.
They'd pick cotton during the day,
eat peaches for lunch, her fingers
sticky the rest of the afternoon.
There was a boy who worked the farm,
Jerri, who kissed her one July afternoon
and then never returned to work.
There were thunderstorms, she said
so quick and fierce, all you could do
was lay in the fields and let the rain
wash your dirty face, your hair,
pray you didn't get struck by lightning.
And dogs would appear, follow behind
you for an hour or two then disappear.
Her aunt would walk out into the field
with a wicker basket of peaches, smiling,
saying take two, take three and she took
all she could stomach. In this nursing
home, now, I don't have anything to give her
except my time, my ears for her stories, so
on my next visit I bring her a peach and while
she can no longer chew it, still she lifts it
to her nose, smells the sweetness beneath
the surface, rubs it against her cheek,
a scene so private I have to look away.

– *Steve Cushman*

A MAN CALLED Champion

By Kevin Maurer · Photographs from the Wilmington Railroad Museum

The Atlantic Coast Line's Champion Davis made the legendary trains run on time – and he painted them purple

He was known as "Mr. Coast Line."

A dandy who rolled into Wilmington most Saturdays on a train painted royal purple, he was impossible to miss strolling downtown dressed in a tailored suit, straw boater in the summer and a polished cane.

Champion McDowell Davis had high standards for both his clothes and his rail line. Under his leadership, the Atlantic Coast Line's main rail line was double-tracked, signs and car numbers were painted with reflective paint, and he oversaw the switch from coal locomotives to diesel. During its heyday in the 1950s, the Atlantic Coast Line promised to take Florida-bound tourists from New York to Miami in 24 hours.

But when standards weren't met, Davis was known to use an extensive vocabulary of profanity. "He uses more polite (sic) swear words in normal conversation than any fellow Episcopalian I know," a colleague said at Davis's 75th birthday party in 1954.

Davis gave the rail line 60 years of his life — 15 of those as president. He had no wife. No family. Just work. "He worked for the same company for longer than some people lived," says Mark Koenig, director of the Wilmington Railroad Museum. "He was a sober character when he approached his business."

But in the end, on a Thursday in 1955, the railroad broke Davis' heart when the Atlantic Coast Line's board of directors decided to relocate the company's headquarters to Jacksonville, Florida, after 115 years in Wilmington.

The World's Longest Line

Although Wilmington is now known as the Port City, when the Wilmington to Weldon line was completed in 1840, the city became a railroad town.

Amazingly, the 161.5-mile line was at that time the longest railroad in the world, stretching from Wilmington to

Weldon, a small town just south of the Virginia line near Roanoke Rapids. The city of Goldsboro — the midpoint of the Wilmington to Weldon line — owes its existence to the railroad, and by extension, to Champion Davis.

Champ Davis was born near Hickory in McDowell County, North Carolina, in 1879. His father moved to Wilmington to work for the railroad. Davis joined his father at the railroad on March 1, 1893, at the age of 13. He started as a messenger boy at the Wilmington & Weldon's freight office before working his way up the ranks, first as a stenographer, then in 1898 as a rate clerk and two years later the chief clerk.

The Wilmington & Weldon merged with the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad in 1900. At that time, Davis was well on his way up the ranks. By 1911, he was a freight agent in Savannah, Georgia. He returned to Wilmington in 1920 as the rail line's assistant freight traffic manager and five years later took over as freight traffic manager. By 1939, Davis was general vice president of the railroad.

When the Atlantic Coast Line's president died suddenly in 1942, the board promoted Davis to president.

Royal Purple

One of Davis' first acts was declaring purple the line's official color. The engines and cars were all repainted. The color was unmistakable as the cars rumbled down the lines. He also increased the speed limit for trains heading between New York and Miami to 90 miles an hour.

The Atlantic Coast Line's premier passenger train — The Champion — was named after its president.

"The Champ was always packed, and we didn't stop serving dinner until everyone got fed . . . no matter how long it took," James Longmire, who worked on the train, told an interviewer in 1992. "We called the Champ 'Big Bertha' because tips were so good we didn't have to cash our paychecks."

Under Davis' leadership, the railroad was "generally regarded as one of the best maintained plants in the country," according to Davis' obituary in *The New York Times*. The paper notes that Davis was criticized by Wall Street for spending more on maintenance than the average railroad. Davis' reply, according to the *Times*, fit with his reputation for high standards: "I do not recall that anyone has suggested that Coast Line retard its traffic and revenue growth so as to conform to an 'average.'"

By 1955, more than 1,500 Wilmington residents were on the Atlantic Coast Line's $6.5 million payroll, according to historical records. People joked that if you lived in the Port City, you either worked for Davis or knew someone who did.

But Davis always saw Wilmington as home. He had a house on

5th Avenue and had family land in Porters Neck, but his real home was on the rails. He spent most days in his office car traveling up and down the line, meeting with managers and inspecting the line's stations and depots.

"He spends a large portion of his life in his office car, which no happily married man would be permitted to do, going over the entire Coast Line System, and thereby has a very unusual knowledge of the property, its needs, and above all, is acquainted with its various officers, together with many of its workers, who pull together as a team to make the Coast Line what it is," said an executive, who represented the rail line's board at Davis' 75th birthday party in New York.

On Saturdays, Davis would arrive in Wilmington in time for a Sunday staff meeting with his executives before spending the rest of the day with his mother and sisters. But his work came at the expense of a wife and home life, a fact Davis reflected on during his 75th birthday celebration. "I did not overlook courtship, but the best I ever accomplished was to come out second best several times," Davis said. "True, some of the objects of my interest later became widows and married again, but I was never in the race except on first try."

The railroad was his wife, but that relationship ended in divorce.

Black Thursday

A year after Davis' 75th birthday celebration, the board announced plans to move the railroad's headquarters from Wilmington to Jacksonville, Florida, on December 10, 1955, a date that became known as Black Thursday in Wilmington history.

But the reason for the move seemed to be more about geography and politics than anything else. The Atlantic Coast Line's completion of the Fayetteville Cutoff train line from Wilson to Florence, South Carolina, trimmed 60 miles off the north-south route and made the line to Wilmington a dead end. The Atlantic Coast Line was also looking to add the Florida East Coast Railway to its network. Bringing jobs to Florida would help the Atlantic Coast Line's case with state regulators scrutinizing the deal.

Julie Rehder, marketing and public relations administrator at Davis Health Care, which was founded by Champ Davis and opened in 1966, told the *StarNews* that Davis and the board were at odds: "By that time, he had done all he could for the Atlantic Coast Line and had lost some favor with some other railroaders who no longer appreciated his style, the very style that had made the Atlantic Coast Line so successful," Rehder said. "Champ wanted it to be the best railroad in the country and by 1951 he said, 'There is no better track structure, roadway, and riding track in the United States than that of the Coast Line, particularly the Richmond-Jacksonville line.'"

Koenig said Davis postponed the line's move for years but couldn't stop it. But Davis' legacy was painted on every car. "When the railroad left, they left with a couple of carloads of purple paint," he said.

By 1960, the railroad was gone, leaving the city with four abandoned downtown buildings. One would become the Wilmington Railroad Museum. Another became the Coastline Convention Center. But nothing filled the void left by the Atlantic Coast Line. Even today, there is no passenger train service in Wilmington. A bus takes travelers to the Amtrak station in Fayetteville.

When the railroad left, so did Davis. He retired from the Atlantic Coast Line two years after Black Thursday. He sold all his shares in the company and refused a seat on the board. It was a clean break.

But Davis couldn't stay idle for long. In 1963 he opened the Cornelia Nixon Davis Nursing Home. The 200-person retirement home was built near his family property at Porters Neck and named after his mother. "He'd greet folks at the retirement home on Sundays," Koenig said. Now known as the Davis

Community, the 50-acre facility for seniors features an assisted living center and a Rehabilitation and Wellness Pavilion for those recovering from knee and hip replacements.

Davis died in January 1975. He was 95. The retirement home is as much a part of his legacy as the railroad, if not more so. His ashes were spread at the nursing home, not on the railroad tracks.

Kevin Maurer is an award-winning journalist and author who lives in Wilmington. His latest book is American Radical: Inside the World of an Undercover Muslim FBI Agent.

Confessions of a First-Time Boat Builder

Creating a seaworthy craft on your own porch takes vision, good friends, and not a little Gorilla Glue. Popular Science *would be proud of* Sapona

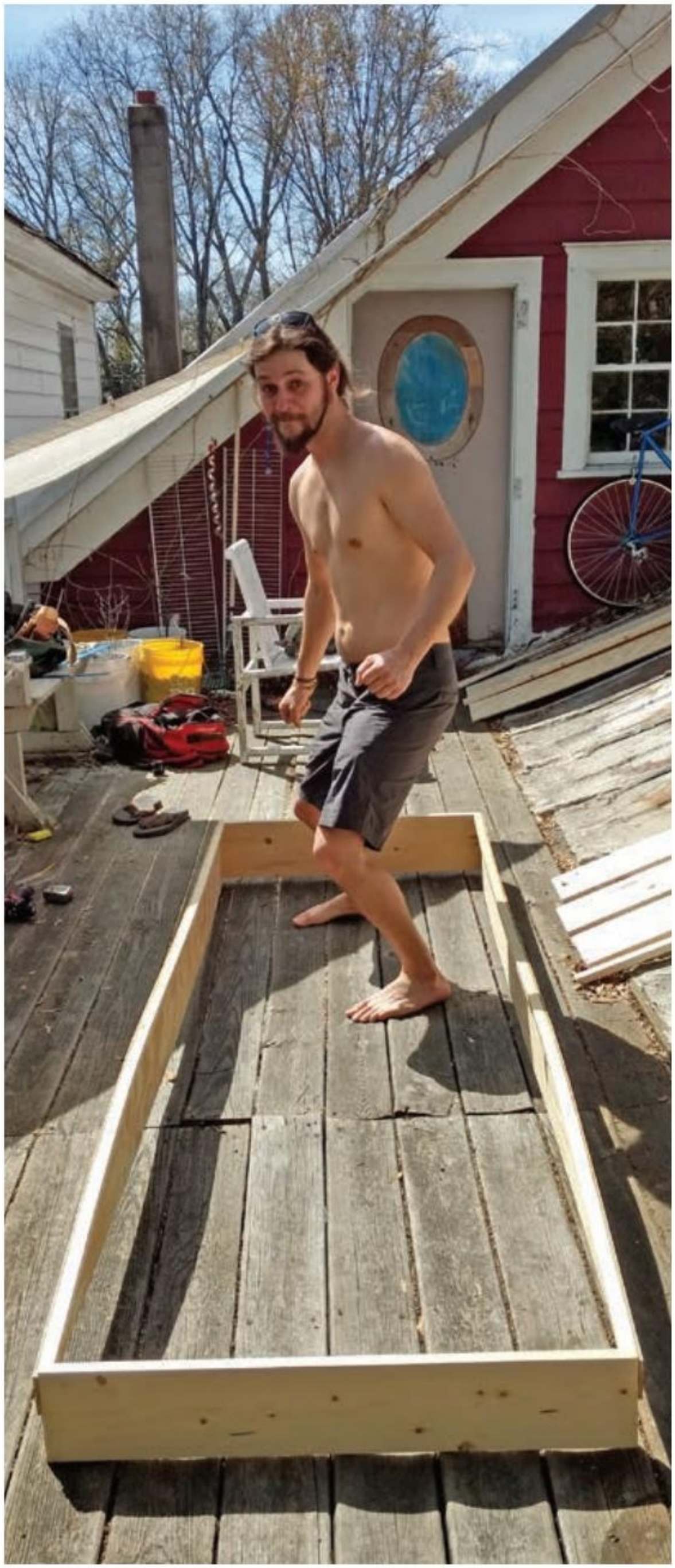
STORY & PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN WOLFE

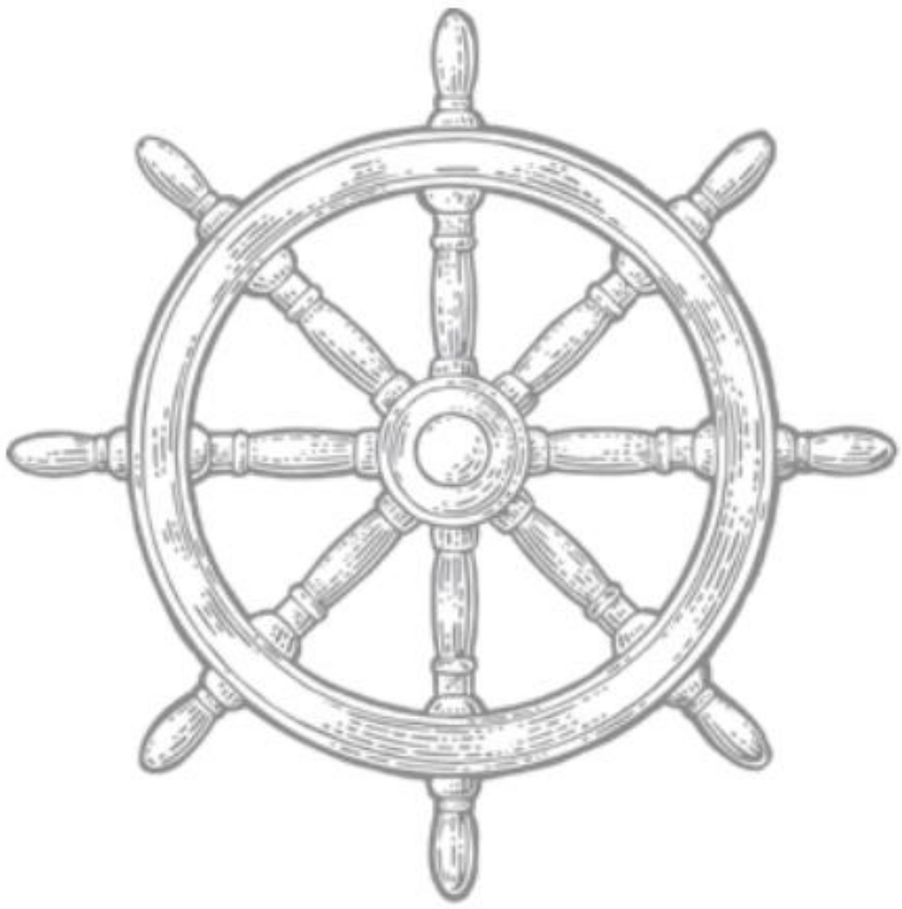
The decision to build a boat was not, for me, a conscious one, so much as it was already a foregone conclusion. I always knew I would do it someday. I just didn't expect it to happen so soon.

The 1,600 miles and two weeks of my most recent voyage across the Atlantic — a yacht delivery to St. Thomas — had given me a great buildup of creative and spiritual inertia. I wanted to put it to good use; rather than writing a play or starting another band, I longed to create something physical — tangible — useful. Something that could help me further explore the wild world and waters from which I had recently returned, that through my journey I had only grown to love more. So a boat it had to be.

In the frozen heart of February, my own heart burned cherry-red with my dream. I became a man obsessed. The hours that were not occupied by work, food and sleep (and some of them that were) became a frenzied search through the ocean-crossing cables of the internet, hunting down boatbuilding forums and eavesdropping on discussions. I devoured videos of a Rhode Island shipwright conjuring a lumberyard skiff from a dusty pile of oak; of Chesapeake Bay watermen lofting traditional deadrises; of Kentucky creekboat builders with their thick accents and reverent demeanor; of Pacific craftsmen of traditional *proa* — sailing outrigger canoes which shunted rather than tacked, their sterns becoming their bows as the wind remained at their backs. And the local boatbuilding tradition didn't escape my attention, either: I studied both the Masonboro-born Simmons Sea Skiff, and the stout traditional lines of Harker's Island workboats.

As it was the off season and my savings had been mostly spent on island rum, buying plans was out of the question. So instead I scouted through the public domain for small-boat designs put there by age or intention. There were dozens; to test them, I spent long winter evenings over my late





grandfather's drafting board, cutting neat little shapes in old card stock and taping them together until I became the admiral of an armada of little scale card-stock models, sailing the carpet of my living room (much to the delight of my cats, and the chagrin of my fiancée). For each model I cut out a to-scale doppelganger of yours truly, a placeholder until the life-size one could afford to buy plywood.

As this was to be my first attempt, I elected to start small. The design I decided upon was discovered in an old copy of *Popular Science* magazine from 1966 that someone had scanned into Google Books; the title of the article was "A Boat for $12? You Can Build It" — pure music to the ears of an aspiring-yet-broke boat builder. I learned during a visit to Home Depot that inflation had added another zero to that figure — still not bad, but more than I had to spare at the time. To earn the rest I picked up a gig as a carpenter with an old buddy of mine, Kirby, with whom I have spent countless hours exploring the world of waves. The added benefit of the job was that it helped me develop a fluency with the material and the tools needed to work it that I would not have gotten otherwise. As Kirby and I framed walls and re-supported 200-year-old ceiling joists, my little boat gestated in my mind, an ethereal idea amid the rooted and fragrant sawdust.

And then — at last — it was March, and the weather was warm and I had the cash and had somehow gotten three days off work in a row. My friend Steven, a cabinet carpenter by day and a poet by night, sat on my back porch, an American Spirit in his thin fingers. Between sips of Pabst I told him of my plans — that I could build the boat here on my porch, that I had

now the time and the money to do so. With his wide grin, he said, "Well, what in the hell are you waiting for? I've got a table saw in the back of my truck." And then next thing I knew we were sighting down boards at Home Depot, checking for straightness. Then we were hauling lumber up my back porch steps, followed by the aching weight of his supposedly portable table saw. The sirens and celebrations of Friday night in downtown Wilmington were joined by the high-pitched whine of the saw as we ripped the boards that would become the chine logs and cut the sweeping bow curve in the plywood sides (how my neighbors felt, I'm afraid to ask). And finally it was midnight and the ashtray was full and my porch table was a battlefield of dead soldier beer cans, and Steven and I were looking at a pile of wood which was only an assembly away from becoming a boat.

The next morning I woke with the sun (a rare feat for this writer) and broke my fast out on the warped boards of my avant-garde boat shop. Armed with a power drill, Gorilla Glue and stainless-steel screws, I glued, clamped and screwed the chine logs into the bottom edge of the plywood sides.

That afternoon, Kirby came by with his Skil saw, and we cut and joined the transom and bow boards to the side planks. At last we had something three-dimensional. The bones of my boat were beginning to take shape. We were joined later by Steven, and the three of us, working together, bent the bottom piece on to the sides; when the screws were in and the glue had dried we flipped her over and, lo and behold, there was something which might be recognized as a boat sitting on my back porch. Our muscles sore and sunburned, with a faint patina of glue covering our hands, we looked at what we had built and were happy.

One great joy in this project was sharing it with my dear friends — without them, it wouldn't have been possible. Kirby and Steven and I shared not only laughter and time together, but the delight found in watching something come together before our eyes because of our actions. Where before there was nothing, now, the beginnings of a boat, the realization of a dream — something larger than what any of us could have done alone.

On the last full day of construction, I attached the gunwales, screwed in the ribs and seat supports, and knocked together a pair of oars from the leftover scraps. I think she truly became a boat, and not just a lopsided plywood box, the moment that I screwed on the keel piece. Each screw I drove, every piece I shaped with a chisel until it fit just right — every part of the work required the utmost care. This creation of mine would need to stand up to the elements; one careless screw might leave a gap or void through which water could intrude, while cutting a piece too short might leave it without the strength required of it. Every move I made had to be my very best, no matter how small or insignificant it might seem. The complex machines of humanity, the products of countless hours of engineering and design, often fail due to a single careless mistake, don't they? Each part must perform in order to make the whole thing work.

And there is a pleasure in doing careful work, in knowing something has been done correctly. The true joy of any craft, whether it's writing or boatbuilding, is found in the work itself — *if* it is done well.

I painted her bottom bright white and her topsides Carolina blue — traditional workboat colors, simple and handsome. As she would primarily serve as a tender to my sailboat, I added some caprails from some old teak I had lying around (I am of the opinion that every yacht needs some brightwork). The final step was to add a bow handle and two oarlocks, which I fashioned from an old length of line, and then to paint her name and hailing port on her transom. The name I chose was *Sapona*, taken from the Native American word for the Cape Fear River, with whose waters she would soon become well acquainted.

The ultimate, objective test of my handiwork was the real world. Nature with a capital "N," the winds and currents in the water upon which my little craft would (hopefully) float. At only eight feet long and 60 pounds, she needed no trailer, so I loaded her into the back of my little pickup truck and drove seaward for her maiden voyage. My hands gripped the steering wheel with nervous anticipation as I headed across town to Trail's End boat ramp.

After months of anticipation and hours of labor came the moment of truth, when the wood I had shaped touched saltwater for the first time. Gingerly, I stepped aboard; I felt her take my weight and buoy me up as the water caressed us both. She did not leak, I was thrilled to learn — not a drop. I cast off my bow line, shipped my oars into their locks, and

stroked across the waterway toward Masonboro Island. The sky overhead was the same pale blue as my topside paint; herons and egrets silhouetted themselves against the green Spartina grass as they hunted for finger mullet at the tidal creek's shallow edges.

I love boats because they are a means of getting me closer to the natural world. *Sapona* had succeeded in this, not only by carrying me out here, but also by reintroducing me to the world outside my back window, my porch of carpenter bees and cardinals that sing from the top of the big pecan tree. Building her had also given me new knowledge of myself, of what I was capable of doing—a priceless gift. And I had learned that the care that I put into building her must continue, else she will rot away beneath me. For it's maintenance that makes the yachtsman, Kirby told me, and being made of wood, *Sapona* is more fragile than her fiberglass sisters. But I think that's a good thing—it only makes me a more careful captain, and makes her feel more like a living thing which needs love and attention. After all, it's really love that builds boats, and continued love that keeps them afloat.

I rowed all afternoon against a fierce south wind and a tide which tried to flush me in the wrong direction. When I returned to the dock I was exhausted, red-faced, thirsty; my brand-new boat was covered in mud from the flats and I had already gouged a scrape in the bottom paint against an oyster shell when I had pulled her up on the beach to rest a moment in the welcome shade of a live oak. But all I could feel was exhilaration, and pride in what I had done: I had built a boat.

John Wolfe studied creative nonfiction at UNCW. When he's not in the water, he can be found online at thewriterjohnwolfe.com.

Scents and Sensibility

The loss of smell brings an unexpected gift

By Bridgette A. Lacy

By Bridgette A. Lacy

Maybe I should have taken more time to smell the fragrant rosemary in my yard. Or I should have soaked in my almond-scented bubble bath more often. Perhaps, I should have savored the sweetness of my Uncle Jack's red roses instead of assuming they would always be there for me.

Nineteen years ago, when I lost my sense of smell, my ability to relish those simple pleasures went away. I never thought that at 37 years old, my olfactory nerve would be stolen by a benign brain tumor the size of a tennis ball.

Even when my neurosurgeon told me that losing my ability to smell was one of the side effects of brain surgery, the reality of what that meant didn't sink in. How could it? After all, I was facing life or death.

Before the tumor — and the surgery that saved, but forever changed — my life, I was a smell-centered person. Smells resonated with me. They had the ability to set my mood or even shape my attitude about ordinary, everyday activities. A soak in that aromatic bath soothed me at the end of a long day.

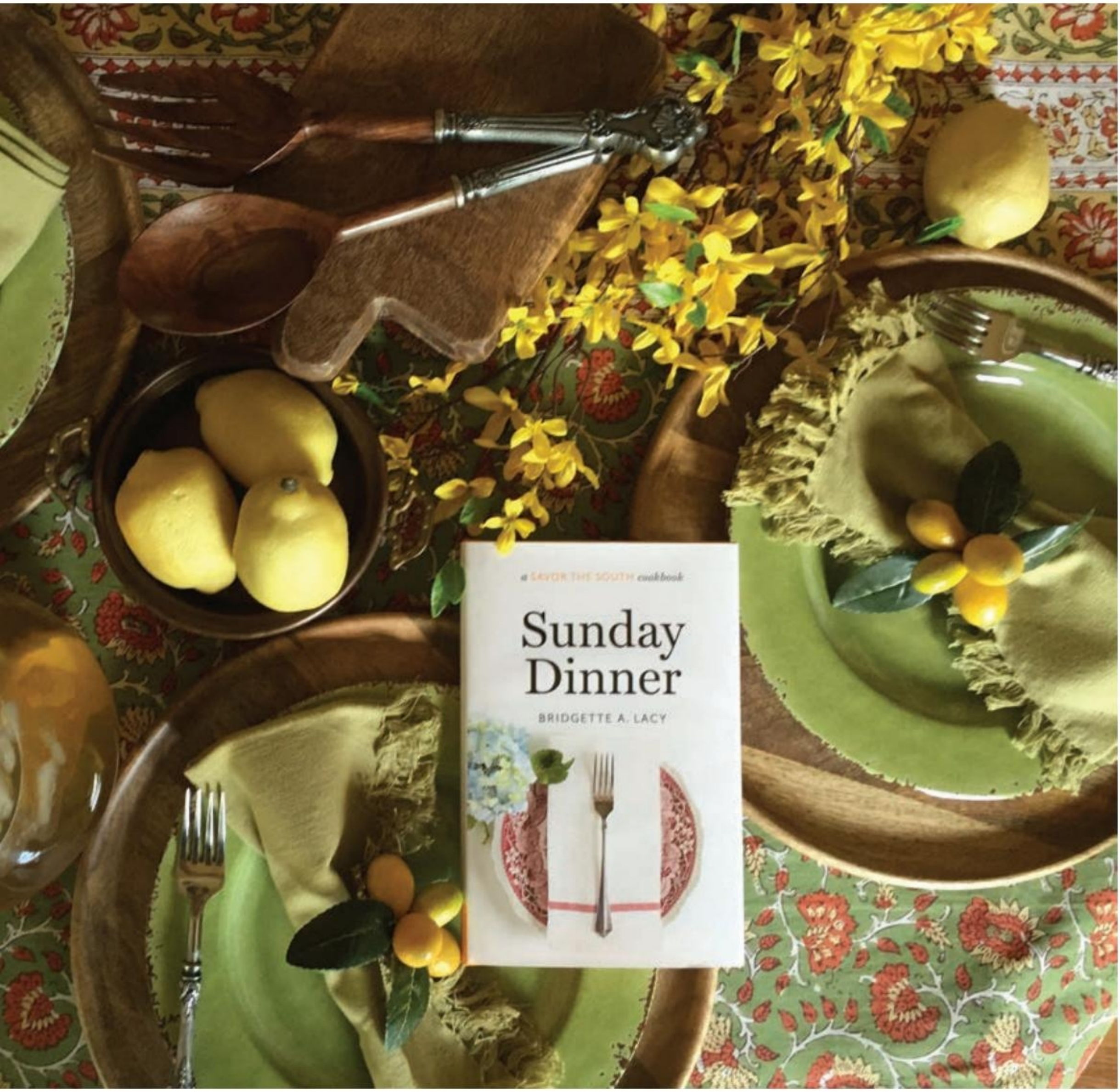
A sip of orange, cinnamon-flavored tea calmed me in the evening. The sensuous waft of the lavender growing in my front yard delighted me as I rocked back and forth on the porch. I appreciated the world so much more, in part through my nostrils.

At first, I thought I had survived the surgery with my sense of smell intact. I even complained to a nurse that my ICU room stank. Phantom odors, I guess.

I returned home from the hospital in October 1999 after five-and-a-half hours of surgery. I tried to recover and return to my old routine while also adjusting to the loss of sight in my right eye. It took me awhile to understand why my pot roasts burned to a crisp in the oven. I had always used the aroma floating through the house as a sign the roast was close to done. Sometimes my mother would visit to find a banana or some other fruit rotting on the countertop that I had forgotten about.

I didn't truly realize I couldn't smell until I received two gift baskets that included scented

PHOTOGRAPH BY LISA TUTMAN-OGLESBY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candles, a fragrant bubble bath and soap. As I sat in a chair, a friend commented on the wonderful aroma of one of the candles. She said it smelled like an autumn day. I inhaled to find no scent of anything under my nose. Nothing.

I ran into the kitchen and opened a bottle of Lysol. Nothing.

I ran outside and snipped a piece of rosemary. Nothing.

I was crushed as the realization of what this meant pressed upon me like the weight of a barbell.

At first, I hid the gift baskets in a closet. I couldn't bear to see them and risk being reminded of what I was missing. I shoved them behind the door and tried not to think about them.

Months later, when my scalp began to heal from the trauma and incisions of surgery, I realized I couldn't even get my typical natural high from the hints of coconut and honey in my freshly-washed hair. Shampooing my hair had always been a reassuring, sensory delight. Somehow, it just made me feel better. My aunt would often say she knew when I was at my mother's house visiting because she could smell my shampoo in the air. Now, that was gone too.

After all that had happened to me, I couldn't even sniff my way through recovery. It was hard knowing I couldn't smell my own body. I was changed. It was devastating but I knew I had to find ways to cope with the loss.

It took time, but eventually, I finally mustered the courage to retrieve the contents of those gift baskets. I needed the closet space, but also I was determined not to let perfectly good lavender-scented body wash go to waste. Even if I couldn't enjoy the benefits of their aroma, I still wanted to use them. I am a practical soul at heart.

I started to remember how much I loved it when people commented on how nice I smelled, whether it was from a scented soap layered with a matching lotion or a tiny dab of White Linen perfume behind my ear. The kind words from others about my personal fragrance became the ultimate compliment. I liked that family, friends and colleagues appreciated that about me even though the same experience was unfortunately lost to me. And so, I happily put the gift scents and soaps to good use as they were originally intended.

The hardest part of moving about the world without a sense of smell is explaining my loss to people. It just doesn't seem to register to most that such a condition may even exist. In the course of any given week, some unsuspecting person may say: "*Smell this. Ooh, that smells good, doesn't it?*" The same people are pretty shocked when I reveal that scent does not register with me. Yes, it is a little awkward. However, my loss of smell has actually forced me to relish and rely on my remaining senses.

I cherish the fact that I can still taste. Bitter, sweet, salt and tart still delight my tongue. My love of good food and my affinity for sharing it with others inspired me to write my first cookbook. *Sunday Dinner, a Savor the South Cookbook* from UNC Press, published in September 2015, was a triumph for me. It's been very well-received. (Editor's note: It was a finalist for the Pat Conroy Cookbook Prize awarded by the Southern Independent Booksellers Alliance.)

I set out to make *Sunday Dinner* a life-affirming celebration of recipes, as well as a tribute to the value of meals shared and prepared with those you love. It highlights some of my most endearing memories, many of them intricately and lovingly tied to smells and thoughts of home.

The recipes call to mind my time spent in the garden and kitchen with my maternal grandparents. When I was young, I spent many a Sunday afternoon taking in the familiar smell and sizzle of Grandma frying chicken and the sight of Papa's Nilla Wafer-brown pound cake cooling on the back porch. His cakes always released their own distinct, irresistible aroma that filled the air.

When I'm standing in my own kitchen recreating these time-honored dishes I grew up with, I sometimes think about my sense of smell, or rather the lack of it. As quickly as those thoughts appear, I redirect them to focus on the loved ones who originally created these meals and how much my family continues to influence me in and out of the kitchen.

As the years have passed, every once in a while, I experience a smell memory. It's a curious thing. Once, in a grocery store, while walking past a display of country ham in sealed vacuum packs, I remembered the smell of country ham frying in a pan. It was so real I could practically taste it. Another time, driving home from a day spent with a male friend and his mother, I suddenly felt like I could smell spring in the air. The car windows were down and I remembered how the scents of that season came rushing in with the crisp smell of freshly-cut grass combined with the sweetness of one of my Tropicana, long-stemmed roses. These smell memories come flooding back with such crystal clarity, I almost feel like I really did smell something.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN T. JONES

When that happens, I'm not mad. I'm not upset. I just remind myself that while that part of me is gone, so much more remains. Then, I simply and resolutely smile, take a very deep breath and thank God.

Come 'n' Get It!

The following dishes are one of many evocative of home and family:

Mama's Meaty Crab Cakes

I request my mother's crab cakes almost every time I return to my childhood home. These meaty crab cakes flavored with Old Bay Seasoning are far better than any I've had at a restaurant. They are crunchy on the outside from the cornmeal and moist on the inside. My mother serves them on Martin's potato rolls with potato salad. There will be no leftovers with these. In fact, get to the table fast. These won't last.

Makes 8 servings

1 pound fresh jumbo lump or lump crabmeat
1 celery stalk, finely chopped
1/2 medium white onion, finely chopped
1/2 green bell pepper, finely chopped
2 tablespoons Hellmann's mayonnaise
1 teaspoon Old Bay Seasoning, or more, to taste
1/3 cup Italian-seasoned bread crumbs
Cornmeal for dredging
2 cups vegetable oil (more or less, depending on the size of your skillet)

Place the crabmeat in a large bowl. Remove the cartilage (lump crabmeat doesn't have much). Add the celery, onion, green pepper, mayonnaise, Old Bay, and bread crumbs and stir together gently with your hands so as not to break up the crab too much. Add more mayonnaise if the mixture looks too dry.

Shape the mixture into eight patties about the size of the palm of your hand. If you are cooking the crab cakes immediately, dredge them in the cornmeal. If not, you can store the crabmeat mixture in a covered container in the refrigerator until ready to cook (up to 2 hours) and dredge them just before cooking.

Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat until it shimmers. Don't use too much oil; it should reach only halfway up the side of the crab cakes. Gently place the crab cakes in the pan and fry on one side until browned, about 2–3 minutes. Carefully flip over the crab cakes and fry them on the other side until they are golden brown. Drain the cakes on a paper towel and transfer them to a warm platter. Serve with your preferred sauce.

NOTE * Buy the crabmeat the day of or the day before cooking because fresh crabmeat perishes quickly. Jumbo lump or lump crabmeat makes for the best crab cakes. The meat is pricey, but it's worth it for this special meal.

Esther's Summer Potato Salad

My mother started making potato salad when she was a girl. The oldest of four children, she made it Sunday after church and would make enough to fill the large vegetable compartment at the bottom of the refrigerator. Her father, my beloved Papa, a blue-collar worker, often carried the potato salad in a mayonnaise jar for his lunch. My mother was a Moore, and many Moore family gatherings were marked by this classic summer salad. "My love of potato salad came from watching my aunt Shirley make it and smelling it in my grandmother's kitchen," she says. The scent of fresh-cut celery, onions and pickles drew her closer to the bowl. "We always ate it when it wasn't ice cold. That's why I like it today when it's just made."

Makes 6-8 servings

6 medium white potatoes
1 cup chopped celery
1 white onion, chopped
1/2 cup pimentos
5–6 sweet pickles, chopped
3 hard-boiled eggs, grated
5 tablespoons Hellman's mayonnaise
2 teaspoons prepared yellow mustard
2 teaspoons cider vinegar
1 teaspoon sugar
Salt and black pepper, to taste
Paprika for garnish

Wash and peel the potatoes and cut them in small, uniform chunks. Put the potatoes in a pot and cover them with water. Boil until fork-tender, about 20–25 minutes. Drain the potatoes in a colander and let cool, about 30 minutes or so. You want them warm but not hot.

Transfer the potatoes to a large bowl and add the celery, onions, pimentos and pickles.

In a separate bowl, combine the grated eggs, mayonnaise, mustard, vinegar, and sugar. Taste it. Adjust the seasonings to your taste.

Gently combine this mixture with the potato salad. Season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle with paprika and serve.

Recipes from SUNDAY DINNER: a Savor the South Cookbook by Bridgette A. Lacy. Copyright © 2015 by Bridgette A. Lacy. Used by permission of the University of North Carolina Press. www.uncpress.org

Bridgette A. Lacy served as a longtime features and food writer for The News & Observer *in Raleigh. She is also a contributor to* The Carolina Table: North Carolina Writers on Food.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF UNC PRESS

A Clean Slate

With a cottage in Landfall, Dave and Kathy Thiessen found the perfect way to begin the next chapter of life

By William Irvine · Photographs by Rick Ricozzi and Millie Holloman

Dave and Kathy Thiessen had a dilemma. After longtime careers in franchising and business in Minnesota and Memphis, Tennessee, they were ready for a change. Dave was about to retire, but Kathy was not. And soon they heard the siren song of Wilmington. "We were drawn here because of the beach and the lifestyle," says Kathy. "We have three adult children. Two of them are married and we have five grandchildren, so you can imagine that they are all happy to come visit us here at the beach."

Enter Lindsey Cheek, established Wilmington decorator and proprietor of a design firm that bears her name as well as the stylish housewares boutique Gathered. "I actually met Lindsey through my Realtor," says Kathy, who spent some time commuting between Tennessee and North Carolina at the early stages of the search. While Lindsey and the Realtor joined forces to began the hunt for the Thiessens' perfect house, Kathy and Dave lived in a rented cottage at Wrightsville Beach for a few months. "Living at the beach made us realize that we would rather live within biking distance of the beach," she says.

But it's Dave who is doing most of the biking these days: Kathy was recruited by a private equity firm to take a management position at 101 Mobility, a national franchise company based in Wilmington that

provides products that can be purchased and added to the home — access and mobility equipment for the physically challenged. "We change people's lives every day by providing them with the independence and freedom to enjoy their homes and communities, unimpeded by their physical limitations, " says Kathy.

And soon, success: An attractive brick-and-wood cottage on a cul-de-sac in Landfall was found, an easy bike ride over the bridge to Wrightsville Beach. Soon the decorating wheels were in motion. The Thiessens had sold their house in Memphis fully furnished, so they were coming to the house with a clean slate — and very few pieces of furniture. "We literally started the interior design of the house around a beautiful abstract painting that I found by the artist Ann White," says Cheek of the canvas that now hangs in the living room, in an ethereal, beachy palette. "The style of Dave and Kathy's house in Tennessee was very different — there was lots of furniture with dark wood and dark colors. Kathy was not used to working with blues, greens and aquas, so this was a whole new experience for her."

Upon entering the house, you are greeted by a light and airy living room flanked by an elegant dining area, which the Thiessens use for smaller dinner parties. A dining table and chairs from the previous owners are jazzed up with an elegant gray sideboard, custom-designed by Cheek and rendered by a Georgia furniture maker. In the living area, a pair of buttery leather club chairs flank the fireplace, surrounded by built-in bookshelves and an extra-

long slouchy sofa covered in beige linen, which rests in front of a tall console table from Tritter-Feefer in Atlanta.

French doors off the living room lead to an attractive outdoor terrace, which is the family's sitting area of choice for nine months of the year. A walk out the back door leads to a fire pit — "We love having oyster roasts out here," says Kathy — and a short trip to a walking path and the perfectly groomed green of the golf course. From here you get a nice view of the back of the house, whose board-and-batten wood with bleached brick is topped by a cedar-shingled roof — reminiscent of a 1930s Connecticut country house.

But the centerpiece of the house for the Thiessens is the large, casual kitchen. Kathy has her entertaining down to a science, and often must host business dinners for 20 people at the drop of a hat. "I wanted to entertain a group of associates six weeks after we moved, and Lindsey quickly put a plan together and I was ready to go," says Kathy. The center island, which can be used for buffets, makes it easy to entertain large and small groups of people. An upholstered banquette underneath a bay window can (and often does) seat up to 10 people. "Our grandchildren think the kitchen has a great 'dance party' open-floor plan," she says with a laugh. The room is further brightened by a large picture window with a view into a heavily wooded side yard. Cheek added a Louis XVI-style bench in front of it from Modern History.

It's always a great (but not so common) situation when the client and decorator can work together in such harmony, Kathy confesses: "Lindsey understood our style. And her creative spirit made the entire process so easy. She transformed our home into a beautiful place to live."

William Irvine is the senior editor of Salt.

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ALMANAC

June

By Ash Alder

June evening fades in such a way you wonder if it's all a dream. We let go of spring, our palms now cupped to receive the first blackberries, scuppernongs, Cherokee Purples warm from the sun.

Plump strawberries slowly vanish from the patch, and when the fireflies come out to dance, out, too, comes the homemade mead.

This year, summer solstice falls on Thursday, June 21. We celebrate the longest day of the year with bare feet, new intentions, sacred fire and dance. Now until Dec. 21, the days are getting shorter.

Savor the fragrant amalgam of honeysuckle and wild rose. Feel the hum of heavy hives, porch fans and crickets. And as cicadas serenade you into dreamy oblivion, sip slowly the sweetness of this golden season.

Whistling for More

I can't see "Butter Beans" hand-painted on a roadside sign without hearing the Little Jimmy Dickens tune my grandpa used to sing or hum or whistle to himself on quiet Sunday drives:

Just a bowl of butter beans
Pass the cornbread if you please
I don't want no collard greens
All I want is a bowl of butter beans.

Red-eye gravy is all right
Turnip sandwich a delight
But my children all still scream
For another bowl of butter beans.

When they lay my bones to rest
Place no roses upon my chest
Plant no blooming evergreens
All I want is a bowl of butter beans.

The Carolina Chocolate Drops sing a much sultrier song about this summer staple, but both tunes suggest that, in the South, the lima is the darling of beans.

Good for the heart (this sparks another ditty but we won't go there), butter beans are rich in dietary fiber, protein, minerals and antioxidant compounds.

Slow cook them or toss them in a cold summer salad. Regardless of how you choose to eat them, best to get them fresh while you can.

On this June day, the buds in my garden are almost as enchanting as the open flowers. Things in bud bring, in the heat of a June noontide, the recollection of the loveliest days of the year – those days of May when all is suggested, nothing yet fulfilled.

– Francis King

I wonder what it would be like to live in a world where it was always June.

– L. M. Montgomery

Gifts for Papa

Father's Day falls on Sunday, June 17. I think of my papa's old fishing hat, how it would slide down my brow and, eventually, past my eyelids, then remember his hearty laugh. A few seeds of inspiration for the beloved patriarch in your life:

A new feather for the old cap.
Homemade bread for mater sandwiches.
Pickled okra – local and with a kick!
Homemade mead.
Seeds for the fall garden: lettuce, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, pumpkin.

Magic, Mighty Oak

When the sun sets on Saturday, June 23, bonfires will crackle in the spirit of Saint John's Eve. On this night, the ancient Celts would powder their eyelids with fern spores in hopes of seeing wee nature spirits dancing on the threshold between worlds.

The Celts sure loved their nature spirits. According to Celtic tree astrology, those born from June 10 – July 7 resonate with the sacred oak, a tree said to embody cosmic wisdom and regal power within its expansive roots, trunk and branches. Strong and nurturing, oak types radiate easy confidence. They're most compatible with ash (Jan. 22 – Feb. 18) and reed (Oct. 28 – Nov. 24) and ivy (Sept. 30 – Oct. 27).

If you find yourself in the company of an ancient oak on a dreamy summer evening, do be on the lookout for playful flashes of light.

Arts Calendar

Rent at the Wilson Center

6/2

Dining and Dancing on Water Street

6/10

Quest for Blackbeard Lecture

6/19

6/1 Downtown Sundown Concert: Red Zeppelin

6:30 p.m. – 10 p.m. Head to Riverfront Park for the 13th annual Downtown Sundown concert series, featuring the band Red Zeppelin. Beer, wine, and food available for purchase. Admission: Free. Riverfront Park, 5 N. Water St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 763-7349 or wilmingtondowntown.com

6/1 & 2 North Carolina Treasures Weekend

The Old Baldy Foundation hosts a weekend-long celebration of North Carolina culture, history, cuisine and more. The festivities begin with a Swine & Spirits Dinner on Friday night, featuring a gourmet whole hog menu and assortment of drink tastings, followed by The Gala in White on Saturday night, which features a buffet, live music, silent auction and more. Admission. Various locations at Bald Head Island. Info: (910) 457-7481 or oldbaldy.org.

6/2 Rent

2 p.m. & 7:30 p.m. The popular Broadway show *Rent* takes the stage at the Wilson Center. The show depicts the lives of seven struggling artists trying to achieve their dreams without selling out. Admission: $41–108. Wilson Center, 703 N. Third St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or cfcc.edu

6/2 Carolina Beach Music Festival

11 a.m. Shaggers and beach music fans, unite! Pleasure Island Chamber of Commerce is hosting the 33rd annual Carolina Beach Music Festival on June 2. No pets. Coolers, beverages and food permitted. Admission: $25–30. Kids under 13 admitted free. Carolina Beach Boardwalk, Cape Fear Boulevard, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-8434 or pleasureislandnc.org

6/2 The Gala in White Fundraiser

6 p.m. A 30-year tradition on Bald Head Island, this fundraiser benefiting the Old Baldy Foundation features a buffet, live entertainment with The Magnificents Band, a silent auction, craft distiller tastings and more. Admission: $75. The Bald Head Island Club, Salt Meadow Trail, Bald Head Island. Info: (910) 457-7481 or oldbaldy.org

6/2 & 3 Carolina Sand Blast Beach Soccer Tournament

Strap on your cleats and head to the beach to play your favorite game in the sand. Games will be played within two divisions (boys and girls), and it's fun for the whole family! Refer to website for registration prices and tournament times. Fort Fisher State Recreation Beach, 1000 Loggerhead Road, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 622-5552 or carolinasandblast.org.

6/3-10 Port City Music Festival

See website for full lineup and schedule. The annual Port City Music Festival is returning for its 10th year, gracing Wilmington with world-class performances and entertainment. Admission: Free. Various venues around Wilmington. See website. Info: (910) 239-9450 or portcitymusicfestival.org/festival-2018

6/6 Coastal Clean-Up

10 a.m. The Coastal Federation hosts a Coastal Clean-Up at Carolina Beach State Park. All are welcome and admission is free. Meet at the marina. Carolina Beach State Park, 1010 State Park Road, Carolina Beach. For info: cordelianorris@gmail.com.

6/6-24 My Fair Lady

Various showtimes throughout the month. Thalian Hall presents the ever-popular performance of *My Fair Lady*, gracing the Thalian stage during the month of June, featuring timeless favorites such as "Wouldn't It Be Loverly?" and "With a Little Bit of Luck." Admission: $27-32. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or thalianhall.org.

6/7-9 Wilmington Sharks Baseball

7 p.m. The Coastal Plain League pits the Wilmington Sharks against the Holly Springs, Fayetteville and Edenton teams this weekend. See website for game schedule. Admission: $7-10. Kids under 4 admitted free. Buck Hardie Field, 2149 Carolina Beach Road, Wilmington. For info: www.wilmingtonsharks.com.

6/7-17 Fun Home

Various showtimes throughout the month. Enjoy the Tony Award-winning Broadway musical *Fun Home*, the groundbreaking story inspired by Alison Bechdel's graphic memoir, as it hits the Thalian stage this month. Admission: $23-28. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or thalianhall.org.

6/8-10 World Oceans Day

10 a.m. Help the NC Aquarium at Fort Fisher celebrate our oceans while playing and learning at education stations, exploring during a scavenger hunt, crafting sea creatures and more. Admission: Free with regular aquarium admission. NC Aquarium at Fort Fisher, 900 Loggerhead Road, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 772-0500 or ncaquarium.com/fort-fisher.

6/10 Dining and Dancing on Water Street

6 p.m. Venture downtown for a sunset Sunday supper, live entertainment, refreshments and — of course — dancing. Proceeds benefit Little Pink Houses of Hope, which gifts breast cancer patients and families with their dream vacations. Admission: $100. Riverfront Park, 5 N. Water St., Wilmington. Info: (336) 213-4733 or littlepink.org/wilmington.

6/10 Cinderella the Ballet

2 p.m. Watch the timeless fairy tale *Cinderella* come to life in a stunning performance by the Wilmington Ballet Company and the U.S. International Ballet. Admission: $15-25. The Wilson Center, 703 N. Third St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or cfcc.edu/capefearstage.

6/14 Jazz at the Mansion

6:30 p.m. Bellamy Mansion hosts a summertime Jazz at the Mansion event, featuring live music by The Ariel Pocock Quarter Quartet. Gather your lawn chairs, blankets and coolers and head to the mansion for an evening of entertainment. Admission: $10–18. Bellamy Mansion Museum, 503 Market St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-3700 or bellamymansion.org.

6/14-16 Cape Fear Independent Film Festival

Celebrating independent films and filmmakers from across the world and from our own backyard, the Cape Fear Independent Film Festival will host its screenings at the Community Arts Center in downtown Wilmington. Community Arts Center, 120 S. Second St., Wilmington. See website for full schedule of events. Info: (910) 341-0001 or cfifn.org.

6/15 Airlie Summer Concert Series

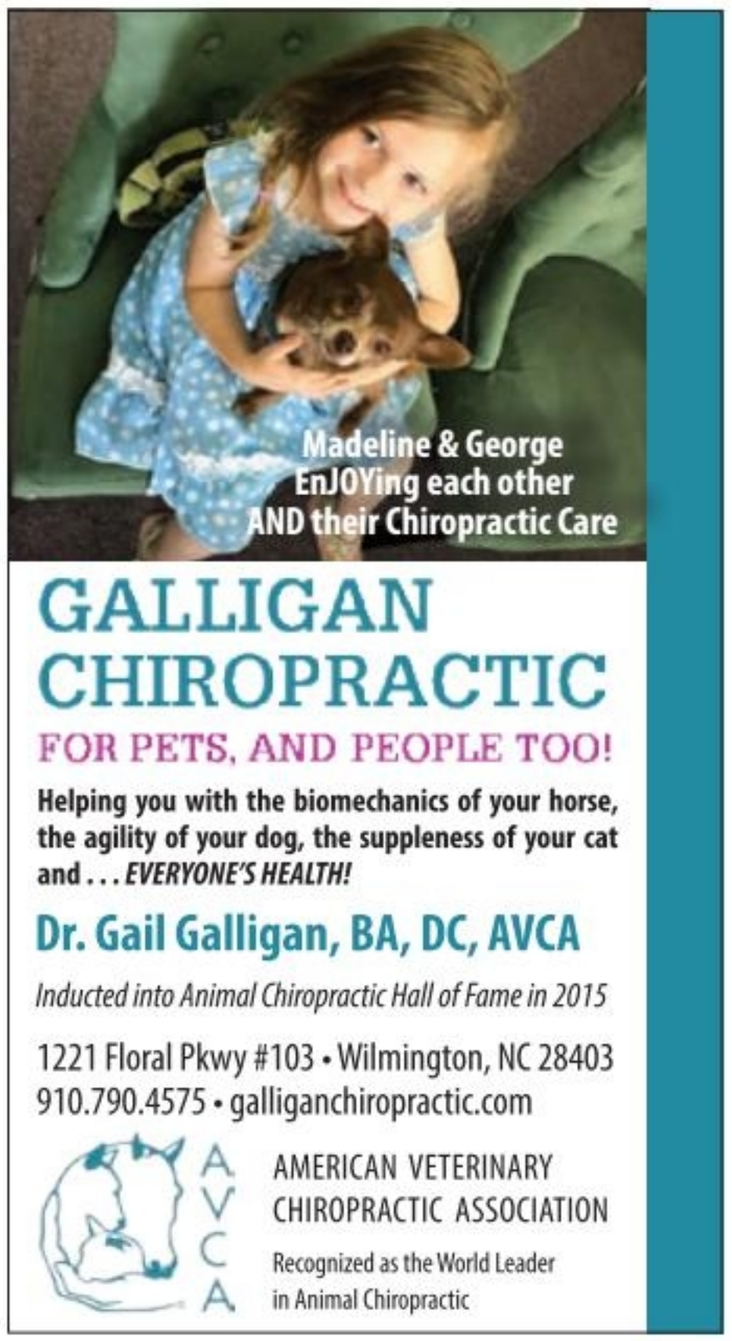
6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Bring your lawn chair or blanket down to Airlie Gardens to enjoy a night of live music performed by the neo-bluegrass band Massive Grass, under the historic Airlie Oak. See website for parking details. Admission: $2–9. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7000 or airliegardens.org.

6/15-17 Bald Head Island Pirate Invasion

The pirates are returning to Bald Head Island for a weekend invasion. Sponsored by local island businesses and homeowners, the weekend will include a visit to the pirates' camp, a sea battle, party, live music, treasure hunt, and more. Various locations on Bald Head Island. See website for schedule of events. Info: facebook.com/ph/baldheadislandpirateinvasion.

6/15 & 16 North Carolina Blueberry Festival

9 a.m. (Friday); 7 a.m. (Saturday). Now in its 15th year, the North Carolina Blueberry Festival is fun for the whole family — food, drinks, live entertainment, car shows, runs, bike races, BBQ contests and more! Come and join in the festivities in historic downtown Burgaw. Admission: Free. Downtown Burgaw. See website for location details for each event. Info: (910) 259-2007 or ncblueberryfestival.com.



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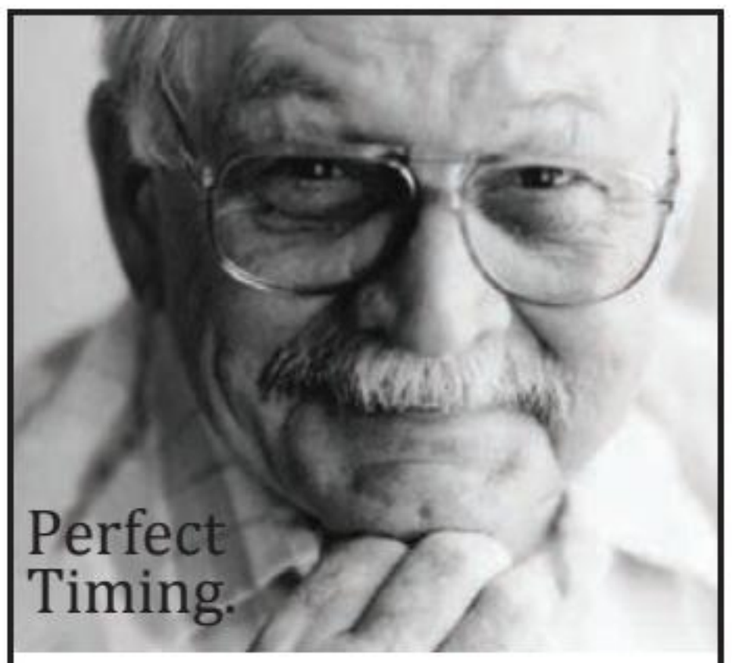

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6/19 Quest for Blackbeard Lecture

7 p.m. Hosted by the North Carolina Maritime Museum at Southport. Baylus Brooks has spent ample time researching Edward Teach's family history and will share his own theories on the legendary Blackbeard to a lucky audience at the Southport Community Center. Admission: Free. Southport Community Center, 223 E. Bay St., Southport. Info: (910) 477-5151 or ncmaritimemuseumsouthport.com.

6/23-27 U.S. Youth Championship

The top youth sailors around the country return to Wrightsville Beach for the prestigious U.S. Youth Sailing Championship. Carolina Yacht Club, 401 S. Lumina Ave., Wrightsville Beach. See website for schedule details. Info and ticket pricing: (910) 256-3396 or carolinayachtclub.org.

6/28 A Day in the Life Luncheon Fundraiser

12 p.m. Join the local organization A Safe Place for their luncheon fundraiser. Proceeds go to helping victims of sexual exploitation and domestic trafficking. Admission: $35 for one ticket, $60 for two. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5101 or asafeplacetogo.com.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

Monday:

Wrightsville Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside beach market offering a variety of fresh, locally grown produce, baked goods, plants and unique arts and crafts. Seawater Lane, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-7925 or www.townofwrightsvillebeach.com.

Tuesday:

Wine Tasting

6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Free wine tasting hosted by a wine professional plus small plate specials all night. Admission: Free. The Fortunate Glass, 29 S. Front St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-4292 or www.fotunateglass.com.

Cape Fear Blues Jam

8 p.m. A night of live music performed by the area's best blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join in the fun. Admission: Free. The Rusty Nail, 1310 S. Fifth Ave., Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

Wednesday:

Free Wine Tasting at Sweet n Savory Cafe

5 p.m. – 8 p.m. Sample delicious wines for free. Pair them with a meal, dessert or appetizer and learn more about the wines of the world. Live music starts at 7. Admission: Free. Sweet n Savory Cafe, 1611 Pavilion Place, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-0115 or www.swetnsavorycafe.com.

Weekly Exhibition Tours

1:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. A weekly tour of the iconic Cameron Arts Museum, featuring presentations about the various exhibits and the selection and installation process. Cameron Arts Museum, 3201 S. 17 St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartsmuseum.org.

Ogden Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Local farmers, producers and artisans sell fresh fruits, veggies, plants, eggs, cheese, meat, honey, baked goods, wine, bath products and more. Ogden Park, 615 Ogden Park Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtonandbeaches.com/events-calendar/ogden-farmers-market.

Poplar Grove Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Open-air market held on the front lawn of historic Poplar Grove Plantation offering fresh produce, plants, herbs, baked goods and handmade artisan crafts. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 U.S. 17 North, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.poplargrove.org/farmers-market.

Thursday:

Wrightsville Beach Brewery Farmers Market

2 p.m. – 6 p.m. Come support local farmers and artisans every Thursday afternoon in the beer garden at the Wrightsville Beach Brewery. Shop for eggs, veggies, meat, honey and handmade crafts while enjoying one of the Brewery's tasty beers. Stay for live music afterward. Admission: Free. Wrightsville Beach Brewery, 6201 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-4938 or www.wbbeer.com.

Yoga at the CAM

12–1 p.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. Sessions are ongoing and are open to both beginners and experienced participants. Admission: $5–8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201

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S. 17th St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Friday & Saturday:

Cape Fear Museum Little Explorers

10 a.m. Meet your friends in Museum Park for fun, hands-on activities! Enjoy interactive circle time, conduct exciting experiments, and play games related to a weekly theme. Perfect for children ages 3 to 6 and their adult helpers. Admission: Free. Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-4370 or www.capefearmuseum.com.

Blackwater Adventure Tours

Join in an educational guided boat tour from downtown Wilmington to River Bluffs, exploring the mysterious beauty of the Northeast Cape Fear River. See website for schedule. River Bluffs, 1100 Chair Road, Castle Hayne. Info: (910) 623-5015 or www.riverbluffsliving.com.

Saturday:

Carolina Beach Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Outdoor "island-style" market featuring live music and local growers, producers and artisans selling fresh local produce, wines, meats, baked goods, herbal products and handmade crafts. Carolina Beach Lake Park, Highway 421 and Atlanta Avenue, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-2977 or www.carolinabeachfarmersmarket.com.

Riverfront Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside market featuring local farmers, producers, artisans, crafters and live music along the banks of the Cape Fear River. Riverfront Park, N. Water St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtondowntown.com/events/farmers-market.

Wilmington Farmers Market at Tidal Creek

8 a.m.-1 p.m. year-round. Weekly market with produce and other foods from vetted local farmers. Weekly e-newsletter. 5329 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: thewilmingtonfarmersmarket.com.

Taste of Downtown Wilmington

2:15 p.m., 2:45 p.m., 3:15 p.m. A weekly gourmet food tour by Taste Carolina, featuring some of downtown Wilmington's best restaurants. Each time slot showcases different food. See website for details. Admission: $55–75. Riverwalk at Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (919) 237-2254 or www.tastecarolina.net/wilmington/

To add a calendar event, please contact calendar@saltmagazinenc.com. Events must be submitted by the first of the month, one month prior to the event.

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Port City People

Quicksilver Waterman Carolina Cup

Blockade Runner Resort

Saturday, April 21, 2018

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Turner, Brian & William Lee

Greg Cohan, Jaden Vines, Rachel Miles, Pierson Fields, Alex Payne

Mindy Johnson, Hadley & Eleanor Iacobelli

Josh Riccio, Martin Vitry

Miranda Bridges, Airiel Weeks, Abby Kern, Brie Carmo

Fiona Wylde, Seychelle Hattingh

Stella Gan, Jany Tousignant

Allison Martin-Attix, Lisa Hoff, Caroline Barlow

Travis Grant, Michael Booth, Danny Ching

Dana Schulte, Traue Van Brunt

Jan Lopinski, Flavio Costa, Nate Humberston

Sonni Honscheid, Olivia Piana

Port City People

Good Shepherd Tee-Off Dinner & Auction

Country Club of Landfall

Sunday, April 22, 2018

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Doug & Michelle Thompson, Jill & Jeff Mays

Sharon Hamelin, Pattie Rogers

Skylar Hoppel, Paul Divitantonio

Sal & Stacey Tinnerello, Ken Johnson

Katrina Knight, Jane Birnbach

Brittany & Ray Caffee

Sam Schwartz, Steve & Susan Crumrine

Eileen & John Ballance

Frank Madonna & Carol Atwood

Fred & Cecile Blankenhorn, Roger Mott

Ellen & Buzzy Northen

Eric & Donna Hickman

Port City People

3rd Annual Lip Sync For a Cure

Raising funds for Relay for Life

Friday, April 27, 2018

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Chris & Dana Lamarsh

Connor Regan, Barbara Wood, Kevin Miller

Maecy Croom, John McLean

Kirsten Daab, Arianna Jo

Brandy & Brad Rigney, Kate & Mike Nye

Terry Lane

Mike Nye

Ronnie & Peter Weppler, Becky & David Lothe

Charlie Lehmann, Lauren Gehring

Tiffany Buoniconti, Erin Waller

Katie Huse, Matthew O'Connor, Tori Jennings

Kevin Miller

Port City People

Harbor Island Garden Club Luncheon

Surf Club, Wrightsville Beach

Friday, May 11, 2018

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Wylene McDonald, Libby Stevens, Leigh Kelly, Debbie Mitchell

Dot Balkcum, Marty Cobble

Nan Spainhour, Katrina Morton

Connie Parker, Brenda Olson

Leslie Musselwhite, Vicki Ryan-Barr

Zekes Partin, Betty Jackson, Ann Davis

Elise Running, Georgia Sanders, Shirlee Gearhart

Freddye Ledford, Pat Hardison

Marianne Scanlon, Peggy Gentry

Margaret Collins, Sybel Booth

Cindy Jupp, Alison Long, Patti Jacaruso, Kathy Williams Gresham, Ashley Miller, Dr. Anne Allen

Summer Simmer

The heat's on in June but the stars say, "Cool it!"

By Astrid Stellanova

Star Children, I do relate to all the mischief you are in right this hot minute with Summer Solstice approaching on the 21st. We're all hot and bothered. I'm a hopeless romantic, too. June is named after Juno, the Roman goddess of marriage. Let. That. Sink. In. If I was to finally tie the knot with Beau, I'd have more pink, tulle, icing and frou-frou going on than Shelby's wedding in *Steel Magnolias*. I would also hand out Pepto-Bismol as a wedding favor, because shortening and sugar are a plural food group in my world, and happiness or heartache still bring stomach ache. Pepto-Bismol solves at least one of the problems. You're welcome. I'm dispensing a few more warnings that just about all of y'all in Star Land need to heed. And why not follow the (free) counsel of older and wiser Astrid? – Ad Astra

Gemini (May 21–June 20)
Honey, you got an itch to be bewitched. And when you say *I do*, remember it's durn difficult to find the undo button. Most folks just settle for a do-over before they have been done over. You have lost your mind because somebody has been wooing and undoing you. Your powers to charm and bewilder can strike in the same sentence. If you see a greener pasture, we know your M.O. You will be over the fence and bolted before the one you loved and left has even figured it out. The sensible thing would be to just hit the pause button. But Sugar, sensible is not in your wheelhouse.

Cancer (June 21–July 22)
You cannot hear thunder. What got into you, Sugar? Let me just say, Karma honked the horn at you and you just sashayed right on past. You cannot outrun your destiny. Take two minutes to read that again. There is a real need for you to own what happened, and make amends.

Leo (July 23–Aug. 22)
My Lord! Somebody steered you wrong, but you decided that somebody knew more than everybody else. That friend could be a serial killer and you would still think they would go for your bail. This is going to hurt, this cliff dive, because you convinced yourself the very one driving you over cared about you. Let the healing begin.

Virgo (August 23–Sept. 22)
This is your life. And this month is like spending 24 hours in a Vegas casino and winning a cup of quarters. Yes, Sugar, it does beat losing. But not by much. Go get you some sunshine, rehydrate, then have a square meal and recover your senses.

Libra (Sept. 23–Oct. 22)
It's a recurring theme: You need to escape, and your bag is packed with your best clean underwear with good elastic. Answer this: Are you running from love, or towards it, Honey? When you recover from itchy feet, you may find nothing that scary is chasing you.

Scorpio (October 23–November 21)
Where is your sense of self-preservation? Is this love or is it suicide? You and your beloved are like planets circling the same sun but on a collision course. You don't have to treat love like nuclear fusion. Love doesn't have to destroy you to excite you.

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)
Be like my dog Woodrow and hit the woof. Howl! Holler! You have tamped down all your emotions and now it is time to let them out! You are not dead yet, despite all your attempts to give that impression.

Capricorn (December 22–January 19)
If you loved yourself as much as you love your pocketbook, you wouldn't let yourself go just because a no-good somebody broke your little heart. Time to splash out on some new duds, a haircut and some Crest teeth strips. Then, love, grin and bear it.

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)
How far are you going to take this bad mood of yours? I will tell you that orange sure ain't your color and it sure ain't the new black. If you kill/maim/sabotage somebody in a jealous rage, the only thing you will have discovered is your own personal hell.

Pisces (February 19–March 20)
By the time word of your adventure traveled back, and it traveled fast, there was nobody who could look you straight in the eye and not think: Lordamercy! So you blew your inheritance on something like a big trip to Dollywood. It ain't nobody's business but yours. Live on the memories, Sweet Thing.

Aries (March 21–April 19)
I'd like to introduce you to your future. But I won't. It ain't in my power to tell you what will happen if you take the steps you've been contemplating. It's extreme, even for you, Sugar. For the love of Pepto-Bismol, don't run over a small child just trying to get ahead when you will anyhow.

Taurus (April 20–May 20)
Lord help us. There is not enough sunscreen in the world to keep you from SPFing this thing up. You know what I mean. You have got one powerful opportunity, and all you need to do is exercise just a smidge of caution. But that ain't happening unless somebody bodily restrains you.

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

Father's Day

A daughter's tribute

By Susan Kelly

When I was 7, my father would stroll through the den on Sunday evenings where I was rapt before *Lassie*, anxious for Timmy's fate in the well, or the barn, or the field. My father would pause, then say, "Watch: Lassie is going to pull on that rope (or apron string, or gate latch) and everything will turn out all right." "How did you know?" I demanded afterward, when Timmy was safely rescued. "Because," he'd say, "I write this stuff."

When I was 9, my sleeping dog snapped at a neighbor's child who reached to pat him, and my father gave the dog away. I never forgave him, and he suffered for it.

When I was 11, had a horseback riding accident, and had to have a kidney removed, my father said, "Do not worry your pretty little head. My pal Bynum Hunter lost a kidney in a sledding accident when he was your age, and he's just fine." (Bynum lived to be 92.)

When I was 12, and began parting my long hair down the middle, my father said, "You should part your hair on the side." "Why?" I asked. It was 1967; everyone was parting their hair down the middle. "Because," my father said, "a middle part makes your nose look bigger." When I laughed at that, or some other pronouncement he made, he'd say, "You know why you're laughing? Because I'm right."

When I was 17, worrying how I'd know when I met the man I wanted to marry, my father said, "You'll know. When you can barely breathe, can't stand to be apart from someone for a single minute, you'll know."

When I was 19, coming to Greensboro for basketball tournaments and debutante parties, my father would say, "Why not drop by and see Nan?" — my glamorous Greensboro grandmother, who lived in a miniature castle on Kemp Road filled with untouchables. I never dropped by, and he never asked if I did. I hope he forgave me.

When I was 21, I called long distance, sobbing, summoning my father to the phone from a cocktail party because the man I was in love with seemed to be uncertain about our future. "It's time to fish or cut bait," my father said. (He fished.)

He was a son of the South, a Greensboro kid, whose own father died when my father was at boarding school. So when textile magnate Spencer Love told him to go into textiles, and a job would be waiting for him, my father went to N.C. State. Frat boy and varsity swimmer, he stayed faithful to "Cow College," as he put it, even in a family sea of Tar Heels. "Ah," he'd say, as I packed the car after a visit home, impatient to return to Chapel Hill, "back to the womb."

For five seasons a year (summer, fall, winter, resort, spring) he went to New York Monday through Thursday, always returning with a present: a Steiff animal from FAO Schwarz, a Broadway soundtrack album (*My Fair Lady*, *Oklahoma!*, *South Pacific*), or a wondrous Surprise Ball, countless yards of crepe paper wound tightly around trinkets at its core. When friends from school visited, he'd admire whatever they were wearing, ask, "You pay retail for that?" and examine the collar label. They adored him.

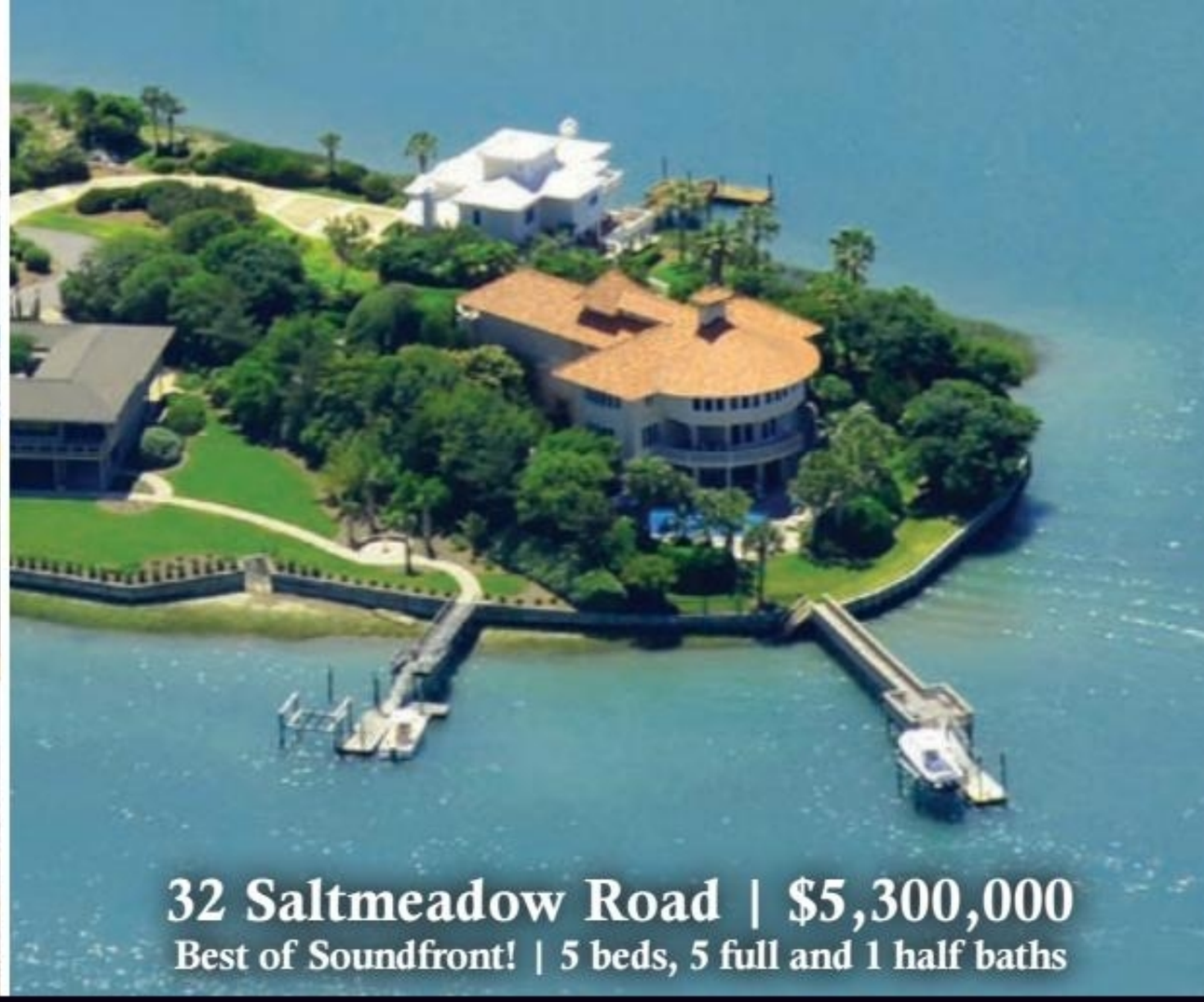
He loved bananas, drank Schlitz and Scotch, and every summer, reread *A Summer Place,* by Sloan Wilson. He peppered his speech with Yiddish from his time in the "rag trade" or "the dress business" — *oy vey* — and with lines from movies and songs. "Listen, Mack," he'd begin a sentence, or, "All this and heaven, too," when I was elated. "Looks like we made it!" he'd sing out from Barry Manilow, over a triumph, and when sorrow struck, "This too shall pass," he'd tell me. "Fool's names, as in fool's faces, always appear in public places," he'd remark at the sight of an overpass or bench layered in graffiti. He brooked no backtalk. "Don't give me that thousand-yard stare," he'd say during an argument. "These proceedings are over. Period." Sternness included shaming. "He cannot tell you he's thirsty," my father said when he came home one evening and found the dog's empty water bowl. "It's a dumb animal." "Dumb" meaning helpless, dependent entirely upon me.

My father taught me to draw "Kilroy Was Here" cartoons without lifting the pencil from the page. He could waterski and whistle, do the jitterbug and the camel walk and a backflip like nobody's business. I never heard him argue with my mother. I never heard him utter a swear word. He refused to wear a seatbelt because he refused to let the government tell him what to do, and he dropped his subscription to the *Greensboro Daily News* the day the paper dropped the "Dick Tracy" comic strip. He refused to buy me a pair of Wallabees because he thought they were Communist shoes, but when I found a three-ring bikini in *Seventeen* that could only be found in New York, he moved heaven and Earth to get it for me.

Protector. Adviser. Jokester. Teacher. Nurturer. Molder. Thirty years on, for a death that came too soon, here's my eulogy, finally.

Happy Father's Day, Daddy.

Susan Kelly is a blithe spirit, author of several novels, and proud new grandmother.



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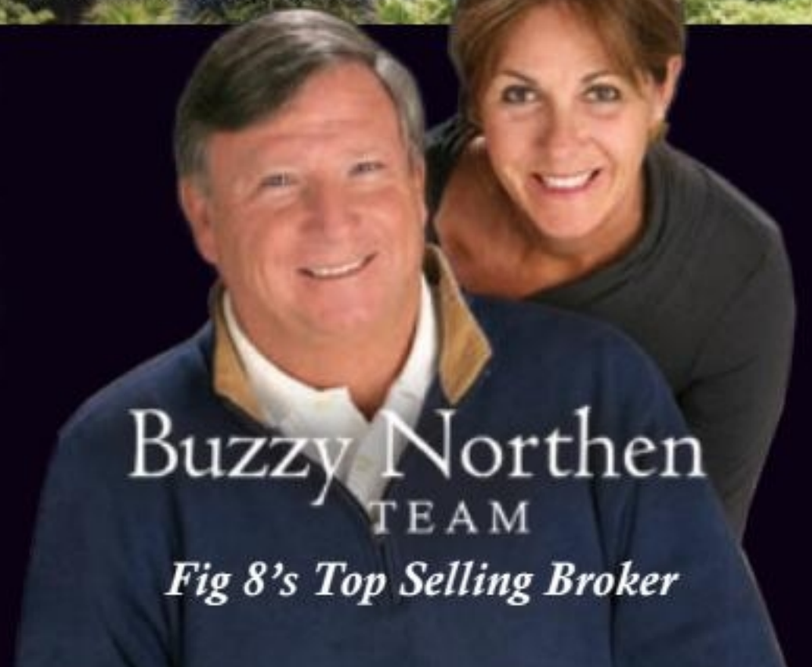

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